

THE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SYMBOL IN THE WRITINGS OF
KARL RAHNER, MIRCEA ELIADE AND H. RICHARD NEIBUHR:
SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY CATECHESIS

A DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER I

THE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SYMBOL IN KARL RAHNER, MIRCEA ELIADE AND H. RICHARD NIEBUHR

Introduction

The function of the religious educator is to set forth the meaning of life in a religious perspective. To do this he must address himself to the basic premise of a religious interpretation of life--the revelation of God to man.¹ It is endorsement of this premise that generally speaking makes a man religious.

The decision to give life a religious meaning is not a matter of simple acceptance of the existence of God or a supreme being. It also involves the interpretation of life in terms of a God who "cares", and the assumption of a responsibility to live one's own life in faithful compliance with that being's designs for man. The nature of the response is differently conceived by various individuals and/or the several communities of religious men. But common to each is the decision to interpret life religiously. This means

¹Cornelius van de Pol, "The End of Conventional Christianity," trans. Theodore Zuydwijk (New York: Newman, 1968), p. 68.

that the existence of God makes a difference in how man views life, how he sets up his value system with its priorities, his attitudes towards himself, others and the world. It is a radical decision, the adoption of a position on the ultimate meaning of man's existence. Such a decision is not lightly made. The premises on which it rests must be clearly understood.

The contemporary world is not, generally speaking, supportive of the religious interpretation of life.¹ It poses several challenges to religious man, calling into question as it often does the very premise upon which his world view rests: the existence of God.

If he is to bring God to modern man, the catechist must know man and the environment in which man finds himself. Rapid change in the wake of the vast expansion in knowledge and knowledgeability of man have radically transformed man's self-concept.² Knowledge and skill in the fields of transportation, communication, medicine, physics, genetics and engineering, have caused men to come to an unbounded confidence in man's ability to resolve any problem, solve any difficulty, search out any truth and create any artifact. They have made for a world in which the vast changes in man's situation have caused him to call into

¹Ibid., pp. 3, 57-59.

²Ibid., p. 61 ff.

question the validity of past ideals for man "come of age". Modern man inhabits an anthropocentric world, in which ultimate meaning can be found in the ambit of the human dimension without recourse to a Supreme Being or God. No longer is the eternal, immutable perfect, but now perfection lies in the dynamic, the continuously improving. It is a world of becoming more than being, a world of the subject rather than the object, a world of the existential, the personal as opposed to the abstractive, rationalistic, and objective emphases of an earlier age.

In this world of shifting values, radical questioning and revolution, stands religious man, himself often questioning, too often fearing; to many, he is an anachronism whose interpretation of life is deemed dated or naive. He is a man who is often identified with institutional forms epitomizing the very elements to which modern man takes exception. To this religious man, the catechist must address the message of Christ in greater depth and meaning than ever before.¹ The problem is how to accomplish this task. In the wake of the Kantian problematic and the subsequent shift from the objective to the subjective stance towards reality, some possible leads for the resolution of the problem of the religious educator stand forth. One of these is a renewed appreciation of the importance of "symbol" in the understanding of man and his world, and the

¹Ibid., p. 122.

recognition of the key role of symbol in the understanding of the religious dimension of man.

One of the men who see the possibilities of symbol in pointing to the resolution of religious man's dilemma is John E. Smith.¹

For Smith, the God-man communication is analogous to the communication between two individuals.² Individuals seek to communicate with one another through various symbolic acts, e.g. gestures, words, actions. With these, they project themselves to one another and hold themselves open to such projections from the other. Through such a dialectic, each seeks to know the intentions of the other and to understand the other. The means of such mutual understanding is the ongoing encounter in symbol. In like manner, God and man are engaged in a 'cosmic dialectic' mediated through symbol. Religious faith is the dialectic whereby man studies the symbolic self-communications of God and seeks understanding of the person of God through the symbol.³

Without such symbolization, it would be impossible to project the experience to others, in which case it would remain individual and private. Symbol is essential then,

¹John E. Smith, "Religion and God," Encounters of Philosophy with Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 227.

²Ibid., p. 237.

³Ibid., p. 236.

if man is to articulate the experience he has of the transcendent God.¹

Looking to the God who is the object of the religious striving of man, Smith notes that he transcends the categories of space and time which are proper to man's experience. Yet he manifests himself in space and time, through various media, persons, places, and events, which, "though not God, mean God, and hence must be interpreted as such by those to whom the power is given to so do." He concludes that religious faith in its grasping of its object is necessarily symbolic.²

Religious faith is also symbolic in that it is necessarily concerned with symbol both for its grasping of the transcendent God and also for its articulation of that experience to others.³

Symbol, in the words of Smith, involves a process in which images are taken from the narrower, more intuitable relations, and used as expressions for more universal and ideal relations which, because of their pervasiveness and ideality, cannot be directly expressed.⁴

Going on, Smith speaks of symbol as the reality whose ultimate referent is supersensible: there are aspects

¹Ibid., p. 243.

²Ibid., p. 232.

³Ibid., p. 236-240.

⁴Ibid., p. 228-229.

of faith beyond the spatial temporal experience of man, e.g. creation, redemption.¹

Elaborating further upon symbol, Smith indicates that symbol is not a conventional sign--i.e. it is not made up whimsically; it is a relation (organic) to an historical situation and at the same time to a community. It employs concrete empirical experience without restriction as a medium of expression; any part of man's experience can become symbolic. Symbol participates in that to which it points, and thus possesses power to produce effects in the life of men. Symbols cannot be changed by simple "fiat". Their life is not wholly at the command of the human will. Change or development is a function in religious symbolism of the dialectic between historical situations and human decisions.²

In the days of post-Kantian probing for a way of encountering the transcendent God who meets man in subjectivity, symbol seems to offer a way of understanding which may shed light on avenues of approaching contemporary man on a religious note.

It is in this context that this study originates. It seeks to examine the role symbol can play in theology today through an analysis of its place in the explication

¹Ibid., p. 229.

²Ibid., p. 229-230.

of the revelation of God to man of prominent writers in the field.

Two theologians were selected, men prominent in their fields within their respective denominations: Karl Rahner and H. Richard Niebuhr. These men were selected because it is felt that their use of symbol in discussing the God-man revelatory experience lends eloquence and contemporaneity to their theologies. Secondly, their insights on symbol in the explication of revelation at times dovetail, and at other times complement one another. Thirdly, it is felt that although the major focus of the study was to be religious education in the Roman tradition, the study of these two theologians from differing traditions would enhance and highlight the ecumenical overtones present in the insights of each by reason of their appreciation for symbolic knowledge in theology.

An historian of religions forms the last individual of the triumvirate, Mircea Eliade. Respected by his peers, he was selected because of the central role which he attaches to symbol in his articulation of the mindset of primitive man relative to his gods. An historian of religions, Eliade is useful to substantiate some of the insights of Rahner and Niebuhr on the self-communication of God to all men by his description of that revelation to primitive man. Lastly, he was selected because of his ability to isolate facets of lingering appreciation for the symbolic

elements which in secularized and demythologized form are still very much a part of modern-day society and as such must be studied by the religious educator.

The position of this study may be stated more precisely. Besides conceptual knowledge, there is in man another form of knowledge, an 'experiential' knowledge and expression, to which Karl Rahner and Mircea Eliade refer as symbolic knowledge. Symbolic knowledge involves a man's whole person rather than simply his intellect. It entails a grasp of an idea, and with it, its cogency and meaningfulness. In such a communication, not only is the idea signified but its very presence is somehow embodied, a presence which invites the recipient to open himself thereto and summons him to participation.

In the form of hypotheses, we can state:

1. This 'symbolic' knowledge is of central importance to catechetics; its explication is needed.
2. There is evidence of a parallel appreciation of the importance of symbolic knowledge in the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, the Historian of Religions, Mircea Eliade, and the American Protestant theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr.
3. It is the position of this study that the convergence of the insights of these three men relative to symbolic knowledge is singularly helpful in making decisions as to the content of catechetics and the approach to that content.

At this point, an introduction to the three men is in order.

Karl Rahner--The Man¹

Karl Rahner was born March 5, 1904 at Freiburg in Breisgau. A childhood and youth in his native town were followed by his entrance into the Society of Jesus at Teldkirch, Austria in 1922. In 1924, at Pullach, Germany, Rahner began his philosophical studies. From 1927 to 1929 he taught at the Jesuit High School at Feildkirch. His theological studies were pursued at Valkenburg, Holland, from 1929 to 1933. On July 26, 1932, in Munich, Germany, Rahner was ordained to the priesthood. Following ordination, he went to the University of Freiburg for graduate work in philosophy. Though enrolled from 1934 to 1936 in the school of Catholic Philosophy headed by Martin Honecker, he attended lectures and came under the influence of the neo-Kantians, particularly Martin Heidegger. Rahner's dissertation which was later published as Spirit in the World², was an attempt to elaborate a metaphysics of human knowing

¹Herbert Vorgrimler, Karl Rahner: His Life and Works, trans. Edward Quinn (Glenrock, New Jersey: Paulist, 1966); William Jerry Boney and Lawrence Molumby, The New Day: Catholic Theologians of the Renewal (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968); "Karl Rahner," America Magazine (Special Issue), Vol. 123, No. 13 (October 31, 1970).

²Karl Rahner, Spirit in the World, trans. William Dych (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968).

and willing, which would seek to address to the Kantian problematic the thought of Aquinas and principles consequent upon that thought. The paper did not meet up with the 'thomistic' expectations of Honecker and was rejected. Leaving Freiburg without the ph.D. in 1936, he returned to Innsbruck to prepare for a doctorate in theology, which degree he received in December of 1936. Rahner was professor of theology at Innsbruck from 1937 to 1939.

Hearers of the Word,¹ a continuation of the probe into the knowledge of man, pushed the questions raised in Spirit in the World into the realm of the relationship of man to God. It was the result of a 15-hour lecture series in the summer school of the University of Salzburg in 1937, and was published in 1941 under the above-mentioned title.

In 1939, the University of Innsbruck was closed by the Nazi Government; thereupon, Rahner betook himself to Vienna, from which place he periodically between the years 1939-1944 sallied forth to lecture at such places as Dresden, Strasbourg and Cologne. July of 1944 found him the Pastor of a Bavarian village. In 1945, he was appointed to teach at a small Catholic college near Munich. At Munich during those years he conducted adult education classes for interested participants with considerable success. Innsbruck

¹Karl Rahner, Hearers of the Word, trans. Michael Richards (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969).

recalled him in 1948 and there he remained as professor of dogmatics until his call in 1963 to the chair of Philosophy and Catholic Weltanschauung at the University of Munich. In 1967, he began his present assignment at the University of Munster.

Karl Rahner was appointed consultant in 1960 to the commission on the sacraments preparatory to the Council. He attended the first session of the Council as the theological advisor to Cardinal Konig and was appointed by Pope John XXIII as one of the first group of 195 theological experts (periti), to the council.

Radio, T.V. appearances, recordings and international lecture tours round out a very busy schedule for an industrious scholar. In 1964, his sixtieth birthday was marked by his colleagues with a two volume festschrift, Gott in Welt (God in the World).¹ It was in this year also that there was conferred upon him the honorary doctorate from the University of Munster and the University of Strasbourg as well; he also holds honorary doctorates from Notre Dame, St. Louis, and Yale.

In 1967, Rahner became the Professor of the Theological faculty of the University of Münster.

¹J. B. Metz, W. Kern, A. Darlapp, H. Vorgrimler, eds., Gott in Welt: Festgabe für Karl Rahner (God in the World), 2 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1964).

Survey of the Works of Karl Rahner

Rahner's bibliography runs to more than 700 titles, including books, articles, monographs and weighty research projects. He was the editor in charge of the 28th through the 31st editions of Denzinger's Enchiridion Symbolorum and was responsible for a manual on the History of Dogma which appeared in installments from 1951. Karl Rahner was the co-editor of the revision of the Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche,¹ a ten-volume revision of a work of similar length of some twenty years previous. Publication of the Lexikon began in 1957. While this work was in progress, the Quaestiones Disputatae² appeared with Rahner as co-editor together with Schloer. They numbered some twenty-eight titles in all.

Karl Rahner's important single articles since 1954 have been collected in eight volumes under the title Schriften fur Theologie.³ Another collection of twenty-four articles was published in 1959 under the title Sendung und Gnade.⁴ In 1961, in collaboration with Herbert Vorgrimler,

¹K. Rahner und J. Hoefer, Lexikon Fur Theologie und Kirche, 10 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1957 to 1965).

²K. Rahner and Henrich Schlier, eds., Questiones Disputatae (28 titles) (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961 ff).

³Karl Rahner, Schriften Fur Theologie, 8 vols. (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1962-70). In English, Theological Investigations, 6 vols. thus far (Baltimore: Helicon, 1962-70).

⁴Karl Rahner, Sendung und Gnade (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1961).

Rahner published the Kleines Theologisches Wörterbuch,¹ which appeared in English as Theological Dictionary. The two men also co-edited a 600-page symposium on the diaconate to which some thirty-three scholars contributed. A basic outline for a Pastoral Theology series was accepted by Herder and the first volume appeared in 1964. Since that time, Rahner has been involved in the editorship and publication of the Concilium² series (published in England as a periodical and in America as a book), and the six-volume Sacramentum Mundi.³ A new series of the Concilium books, this time published in paperback has come to the press and in the editorship of this series Rahner also shares.

As to the availability of the works of Rahner in English, many of them are already translated and all of his major works are being prepared for translation. Six volumes of the Schriften series have been published as Theological Investigations and the publication of the remaining two is forthcoming. The Quaestiones Disputatae series are in English for the most part at present. Among the other works that have received wide audiences have

¹Karl Rahner and H. Vorgrimler, Kleines Theologisches Wörterbuch (Freiburg: Herder, 1961).

²Jan Micklinghoff, Exec. Sec., Ed. Comm., Concilium: Theology in an Age of Renewal, 50 vols. (New York: Paulist, 1969).

³Adolf Darlap, Gen. Ed., Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology, 6 vols. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968-70).

been: The Christian Commitment (1963),¹ the Church and the Sacraments,² Nature and Grace,³ the Theology of Death,⁴ The Dynamic Element in the Church,⁵ and Hominization.⁶

Theology Digest, in 1968, published a Commemorative Issue on Rahner's work,⁷ containing selections from the then unpublished sixth, and the seventh and eighth volumes of the Schriften fur Theologie series. The October 31, 1970 issue of America was also a Special on Karl Rahner.⁸

This is only the briefest of surveys of the work of the man described by several as the greatest living Catholic theologian.

¹Karl Rahner, The Christian Commitment (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963).

²Karl Rahner, The Church and the Sacraments (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

³Karl Rahner, Nature and Grace (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963).

⁴Karl Rahner, On The Theology of Death (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961).

⁵Karl Rahner, Dynamic Element in the Church (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964).

⁶Karl Rahner, Hominization: The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965).

⁷Theology Digest, Sesqui Centennial Issue, 1968. Papers by Karl Rahner.

⁸America, op. cit.

Mircea Eliade¹

Mircea Eliade was born in Bucharest, Romania, on March 9, 1907. He received his Master's Degree from the University of Bucharest in 1928. The following three years were spent at the University of Calcutta where Eliade was to acquire the interest in Indian lore that has been part of his scholarly pursuit since that time. In 1932, the doctorate was awarded him by the University of Bucharest.

Seven years of teaching at Bucharest were followed by four years as cultural attache to the Romanian Legation, first at London, and later in Lisbon. In 1946, Mircea Eliade began a two-year stay at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes of the Sorbonne. Lectureships followed at Rome, Marburg, Lund, Frankfurt, Strasbourg, Munich and Padua. In 1956, Eliade was invited to conduct the Haskell Lecture Series at the University of Chicago. Since 1963, he has been Sewell L. Avery Distinguished Service Professor at Chicago University and Professor on the Committee on Social Thought at the same University.

In 1966, Time Magazine described Mircea Eliade as "the world's foremost living interpreter of spiritual myths

¹Ann Pritchard and D. E. Fitch, Mircea Eliade: A Checklist of His Publications (Santa Barbara: University of California Press, 1968); T. J. J. Altizer, Mircea Eliade and the Dialectic of the Sacred (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963); Joseph Kitiagawa and Charles Long, Myths and Symbols: Studies in Honor of Mircea Eliade (Chicago: University Press, 1969).

and symbolism".¹ Eliade's bibliography is impressive. It includes some forty volumes, in Romanian, French and English. Translations of his works have been made into ten other languages. He has written scores of articles for professional journals and other scholarly works. In the course of his long career, he has edited three journals, one of which, Zalamoxis, he himself founded. An eloquent testimony to the repute he enjoys among his colleagues and peers is the Festschrift² in his honor which was published in the summer of 1969. One of his earlier novels is scheduled for spring publication by Harper.

Survey of the Works of Mircea Eliade

Cosmos and History³ is the work which Eliade feels is his most significant, and it is the one which he recommends reading first. In it he discusses the concept of an archetype, symbolism generally, time and its consecration, and history in the mindset of primitive man.

Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy⁴ is a study of this particular phenomenon in its entirety, delving into the understanding of it found in many different

¹Time Magazine, February 11, 1966.

²Myths and Symbols, op. cit.

³Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History, trans. Willard R. Trask (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1959).

⁴Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. Willard R. Trask (Bollingen Series; New York: Pantheon, 1964).

cultures. Yoga, Immortality and Freedom¹ marks Eliade's real contribution by way of a scholarly work. It is his doctoral dissertation which has been worked over in its entirety once again in its publication under this title. Describing it Eliade notes that it is in greater part "an exposition of the various forms of yogic technique and their history", with an emphasis on "inadequately studied aspects: the ideas, symbolisms of Yoga, as they are expressed in tantrism, in alchemy, in folklore, in the aboriginal devotion in India".

In Rites and Symbols of Initiation,² the 1956 Haskell Lectures at the University of Chicago, Eliade undertakes an extensive study of the phenomenon of initiation male and female, secret societies and then indicates the perdurance of the initiatory patterns in the higher religions including Christianity and Judaism.

Sacred and Profane³ studies the phenomenon of the sacred-profane dialectic in the context of the history of primitive man. Sacred place and time are analyzed as is the notion of nature as sacred and human existence as sanctified life. An historical note is added on the

¹Yoga, Immortality and Freedom, trans. Willard R. Trask (Bollinger Series; New York: Pantheon, 1958).

²Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation, trans. Willard R. Trask (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

³Mircea Eliade, Sacred and Profane, trans. Willard R. Trask (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

development of the study we now know as the History of Religions.

Images and Symbols,¹ with the subtitle "Studies in Religious Symbolism", marks an attempt by Eliade to delve more deeply into some selected images and symbols prefixed by a situation of symbols in the history of man and concluding with a study of symbolism and history.

In Myths, Dreams and Mysteries,² Eliade addresses himself to the relationship between contemporary faiths and ancient realities. The general themes which are discussed are the myths of the modern world, and several other mythic or symbolic themes which perdure into contemporary times. It is in this work that Eliade attempts to enunciate the notion that the myths and the symbols of the ancients are not as simplistic as the pseudo sophisticate that is modern western man would have us believe. Several elements of ancient mythic and symbolic dimension perdure in the contemporary world in a disguised or disfigured form. Several of the needs which were filled by the myths and symbols of times past are still present and are being fulfilled by contemporary man either on the conscious or the subconscious level.

¹Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1952).

²Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, trans. Philip Mairet (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

Mephistopheles and the Androgene¹ consists of a collection of five studies, four of which comprised the 1957-1960 Eranos Lectures. Of particular importance are the second and the fifth chapters, on the mystery of the whole and on religious symbolism respectively. Some of Eliade's most penetrating insights are contained in this particular volume.

In Myth and Reality,² Eliade attempts a depth study of the myth. He speaks of the types, structure, function of myths, their survival and their camouflaging, and in an appendix has some important remarks concerning myths in their relations with fairy tales.

One of the important volumes to understand the whole of the theory of Eliade on primitive religions is Patterns of Comparative Religion.³ After discussing the structure of the sacred he delves directly into the great symbolic systems--sky - sun - moon - waters - stones - earth - woman fertility - vegetation - agriculture. This is followed up by discussions on sacred place and time,

¹Mircea Eliade, Mephistopheles and the Androgene, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).

²Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. W. R. Trask (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

³Mircea Eliade, Patterns of Comparative Religion, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Meridian Books; Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1963).

the morphology and the function of the myth and lastly the structure of symbols. For a comparative study of how the historian of religion works and the magnitude of his task of assimilation of the varied and multifarious data, this would be a good source.

H. Richard Niebuhr¹

Helmut Richard Niebuhr was born in Wright City, Missouri on September 3, 1894. Younger son of an Evangelical and Reformed Church clergyman, he followed his father and brother, Reinhold, into the ministry of their denomination. He was ordained in 1916, having studied at Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois, and later at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis. During his two year stay as Pastor of a St. Louis Parish, Niebuhr obtained his Master's Degree from Washington University. He then enrolled in Yale Divinity School, where he obtained his degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1924. His dissertation was Ernst Troeltsch's Philosophy of Religion.²

Niebuhr's academic career included both Eden Theological Seminary and Elmhurst Colleges. He served as president of the latter institution from 1924 till 1927.

¹Clyde A. Holbrook, H. Richard Niebuhr in A Handbook of Christian Theologians, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean Peerman (Meridian Book; Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1965).

²H. Richard Niebuhr, Troeltsch's Philosophy of Religion (New Haven: Yale University, 1924). University Microfilm, Ann Arbor.

In 1931, H. Richard Niebuhr began what was to become a thirty-one year career on the faculty of the Divinity School at Yale. His students found him a "challenging professor and a demanding one". He "welcomed changes" and was personally possessed of considerable skill and love in counseling. Death came to Niebuhr on July 5, 1962, at which time he was Sterling Professor of Theology and Ethics at Yale. Evidence of the esteem in which he was held may be found in the 1957 publication of a Festschrift¹ under the editorship of Paul Ramsay.

Survey of the Works of H. Richard Niebuhr

H. Richard Niebuhr's work was primarily that of an educator. Commenting in the introduction to The Responsible Self, a posthumous publication, on the absence of a synthesis of his father's ethical thinking among his works, Richard R. Niebuhr stated:

. . . my father always feared once he put his ideas into print, the possibility of reinterpreting and rethinking them in the classroom would vanish, and instead of being a dialogue with his students, his colleagues and with the times at large, his ethical reflections would become a finished piece of business, and a part of the past rather than a lively, appreciative and critical response to the present.²

¹Paul Ramsey, et al., Faith and Ethics (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

²Richard R. Niebuhr, ed., The Responsible Self (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

Before examining his literary works, attention must be called to the Study of Theological Education in the United States and Canada, a fifteen month study of seminary training founded by the Carnagie foundation, which H. Richard Niebuhr directed. An ambitious undertaking, Niebuhr, assisted by his students James F. Gustafson and Daniel D. Williams, traveled extensively, in the two countries, conferring with presidents, deans, faculty and students in some ninety institutions. The results of the study were published in The Purpose of the Church and Her Ministry,¹ The Advancement of Theological Education,² edited by the three men and in a series of Staff Bulletins Concerning the Inquiry into Theological Education in America.³ A further volume financed by the Study was together with the Bulletins edited by H. Richard Niebuhr, the former in collaboration with Daniel Day Williams. It was entitled The Ministry in Historical Perspective,⁴ and its contributors were non-members of the staff.

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, et.al., The Purpose of the Church and Her Ministry (New York: Harper, 1956).

²H. Richard Niebuhr, et al., The Advancement of Theological Education (New York: Harper, 1957).

³Staff Bulletins Concerning the Inquiry into Theological Education in America, April, September, 1954; January and September, 1955; April, 1956. Mimeographed.

⁴H. Richard Niebuhr, et al., The Ministry in Historical Perspective (New York: Harper, 1956).

The Festschrift in Niebuhr's honor contains a Bibliography of the work of H. Richard Niebuhr. In addition to several books and brochures, he was the contributing author in over twenty other volumes or encyclopediae, close to fifty periodical articles, and several book reviews.

The first of H. Richard Niebuhr's major publications was Social Sources of Denominationalism,¹ which traced the effect of secular influences on the church in the course of her history. Critical of the infiltration of the world into the church the author propounds the thesis that sociological and not theological issues all too often initiated the theology and the practice of the churches through the centuries. Though institutionalism is necessary, he reflects, it seems that once it becomes a reality, the institution replaces the goals in the priorities of the membership.

In Christ and Culture² which Clyde Holbrook describes as the "most widely read" of Niebuhr's works the author discusses the problem of how Christianity is to relate itself to culture. The analysis is made in terms of the five possible stances which the church or part of it has taken towards culture in her history.

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York: Henry Holt, 1929).

²H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper, 1951).

Meaning of Revelation is the "most technical of Niebuhr's works". In it he attempts to explicate the concept of revelation of the absolute that is God into the human context with its cultural relativism.

Speaking of The Church Against the World¹ (a work to which Niebuhr contributed as well as being co-editor), and of The Kingdom of God in America,² Holbrook notes of the latter work:

Whereas the first book . . . had helped to explain why the religious stream had taken certain denominational configurations, this book showed the initiating forces in the religious stream itself, the nature of its unity and its capacity to mold rather than be molded by culture.³

The Responsible Self previously mentioned in this survey represents an essay which was to have been part of (a chapter in) Niebuhr's ethical synthesis. There is a lengthy preface by James Gustafson and an appendix which incorporates material from the Earl Lectures at the Pacific School of Religion. This material containing his thought on symbol is of central importance for this study.

Radical Monotheism and Western Culture¹ is a collection of important articles on the universal revelation of God to man and the Radical faith commitment to the sole absolute which it implies. Also of importance are H. Richard Niebuhr's reflection on his center of value theory. Scheduled for future publication are compilations of periodical articles and previously unpublished sermons, essays, and articles.

Having set the goal of the study and introduced the individuals to whose work the study will be devoted it remains to state the method of proceeding.

The methodology will consist in an analysis of the writings of each of the three men and an assessment of their understanding of symbol. The next step will consist in examining the function which they assign to symbol and lastly the use to which they put symbol in their own writings.

Chapter Two will be devoted to the study of the symbol's role in Karl Rahner; Chapters Three and Four to its role in Mircea Eliade and H. Richard Niebuhr respectively. The Fifth Chapter will correlate the insights of the three men relative to symbol's role in the God-man relationship. Chapter Six will set forth the implications of their insights on the role of symbol for the religious educator.

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism in Western Culture (New York: Harper, 1960).

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF SYMBOL IN KARL RAHNER

Approach

George Lindbeck, Lutheran Professor at Yale Divinity School, and his denomination's delegate observer at the Vatican Council wrote of Karl Rahner:

Not since the days of Newman and Moeler, a hundred years ago, has the Roman Church had a theologian of equal originality. Further, judging by Rahner's role in and around the Vatican Council, he is probably the most influential single thinker in his church at the present time. He is also ecumenically important because at many points, his efforts to interpret the faith in the current situation are just as relevant to Protestants as to Catholics.¹

To discern the approach of Karl Rahner to his work, one may turn to an article by the student of Rahner, Johannes Metz, which appears in the English edition of Spirit in the World.

The anthropocentrically oriented theology suggested in these statements characterizes Rahner's theological approach. It constitutes, . . . the

¹G. A. Lindbeck, "The Thought of Karl Rahner," Christianity in Crisis, Vol. 25 (October 18, 1965), p. 211.

'inner form' of his theological statements, allowing him to be diverse without being arbitrary or heterogeneous. For in the end result, his theological statements always center on one thing, namely, the Word of the intractable mystery of God spoken to us in Jesus Christ as forgiveness and love. . . .¹

Rahner's is an anthropocentric theology, one which begins in human experience or human subjectivity, and attempts to explain that experience in the light of Christ.² He begins with a creative affirmation of tradition, and attempts to explore the meaning it possesses.³ As Metz puts it, he seeks the "ever new" out of faithfulness to its historical beginnings. His expertise lies in his ability to analyze traditional doctrinal formulations and interpret them to contemporary man.⁴ Rahner has been able to develop a "hermeneutic" of the church's statements, which serves to indicate their historically conditioned character and their nature as partial attempts to articulate the ineffable mystery that is God and his relationship with man.

Rahner has the ability to ask the key questions and this he does with an awareness of the faith needs of the times. His theology is an attempt to dialogue in

¹Johannes Metz, "Forward" in Karl Rahner, Spirit in the World, trans. William Dych, S. J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. XVII.

²Ibid., XVIII.

³Ibid., XIV.

⁴Ibid., XV.

honesty with men of a pluralistic society and to join in their attempts to resolve the problems of the intellectual and social milieu.¹

Rahner draws heavily from Thomas but he understands him from the perspective of transcendental philosophy.²

Lindbeck terms him a "Thomist cum Kant, 19th century idealism, Martin Heidegger, plus a strong interest in the physical, psychological and social sciences."³

Describing Rahner in the context of Roman Catholic theology, Gelpi notes:

. . . his responsiveness to developments in dogmatic theology itself has placed him in the mainstream of creative Catholic theological speculation. His reflections on created and uncreated grace . . . bear the obvious influence of de la Taille's theory of created actuation and uncreated act. In his theory of the supernatural existential, he has not only profited from De Lubac's reflections on the relations of nature and grace, but he has also attempted to correct some of the exaggerations of the *theologie nouvelle*. In his sacramental theology he has, along with Schillebeeckx and others exploited the notion of church as the primary sacrament and has capitalized on the historical research of the theologians like Poschmann.⁴

Since, for Rahner, theology is anthropocentric, philosophy and theology are so interrelated that the

¹Ibid.; Cf. also Theological Investigations, Vols. 1 through 6, passim.

²Spirit in The World, op. cit., p. XVI.

³Lindbeck, op. cit., p. 211.

⁴Donald L. Gelpi, S. J., Life and Light: A Guide to the Theology of Karl Rahner (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966, p. 4.

understanding of the former is a prerequisite for the understanding of the latter.¹

Rahner's approach to the understanding of man proceeds via the transcendental method. This consists in an analysis of the operations of man, in order to uncover the pre-existent structures (existentials) necessary for such operations to be possible.² Beginning with the most fundamental of questions, that of the significance of being itself, Rahner examines into the a priori metaphysical conditions of being and knowing, which make such a question appear in human consciousness. Philosophically he concludes that only through a preapprehension of universal being (Vorgriff) is knowledge of being possible, since only against this 'horizon' of universal being can created being be seen as particular, and capable of being duplicated in several instances. Relative to God, he concludes that natural knowledge of God is a non-objectifiable awareness of infinite and unconditioned being which is the wholly formal, empty and indeterminate condition, for the knowledge of any possible finite objects.³

¹Francis P. Florenza, "Introduction" in Karl Rahner, Spirit in the World, trans. William Dych, S. J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. XIX.

²Kenneth Baker, A Synopsis of the Transcendental Philosophy of E. Coreth and Karl Rahner (Spokane: Gonzaga University Press, 1965), p. 4-5. Cf. Lindbeck, op. cit., p. 214.

³Lindbeck, op. cit., p. 214.

Herbert Vorgrimler sees God's self communication as the central idea in Rahner's theology. Rahner, he notes, explains it in terms of quasi formal causality. To Vorgrimler the nature of the entire order of grace is based thereupon. The two basic self-communications Rahner visualizes are incarnation and grace.¹

Vorgrimler characterizes Rahner's basic attitudes as anthropocentric, transcendental, and personalistic, a perspective which enables him to heed well man's historicity and his "existence".²

In discussing Rahner's theological orientation, Vorgrimler stresses his pastoral concern indicating in his biographical sketch the several occasions when the theologian had access to pastoral experience.³ Rahner, who touched on virtually every aspect of dogmatic theology with a creativity which is refreshing, took seriously the religious problems of men of his day.⁴ He made a distinction between the theology of the scholar and the preparation of individuals for the pastoral ministry, in the latter of whose case he felt theology should be lighter

¹Herbert Vorgrimler, Karl Rahner: His Life, Thoughts and Works, trans. Edward Quinn (Glen Rock, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1966), p. 82.

²Ibid., p. 28.

³Vorgrimler, op. cit., pp. 14, 25, 31.

⁴Ibid., p. 15, 27.

as to load, more concentrated upon priestly and pastoral practice, and deeper in those areas which are pertinent.¹

The task of theology was constantly to renew the effort to deal with objective theological problems, speaking at all times from the modern situation and in terms of contemporary philosophy. Rahner provided a transcendental foundation for man to his concrete history as the real point at which he can discover self as related to the mystery of the infinite.²

With this introduction, the study may proceed to the examination of the role of symbol in the theology of Karl Rahner. The first question is Karl Rahner's understanding of symbol. Secondly, the function Rahner visualizes for symbol. Thirdly, the role of symbol in Rahner's overall philosophic and theological thought will be analyzed and conclusions drawn.

Symbol in Karl Rahner

A. Understanding

In "Theology of Symbol", Rahner limits his discussions to symbol in its most fundamental sense.

Our task will be to look for the highest and most primordial manner in which one reality can represent another--considering the matter

¹Vorgrimler, op. cit., p. 40-41.

²Vorgrimler, op. cit., p. 52.

primarily from the formal ontological point of view.¹

Symbol, in this sense, is "the supreme and primal representation in which one reality renders another present".² Consequently, he is concerned with what he terms later the "real" symbol and sets aside other forms of representation.³ Of symbol in this sense, Rahner states that: "strictly speaking it is the self-realization of a being in the other which is constitutive of its essence."⁴ It can further be described as the visible and tangible form in which something which appears, notifies its presence and by so doing makes itself present, "bodying forth this manifestation distinct from self".⁵

Symbol, in the formal ontological sense, is so intrinsically linked with that of which it is the manifestation, that, in it, the symbolized is rendered present; the two, however, do remain distinct. The relationship between the two elements, symbol and the symbolized, is a mysterious one. It is that of an intrinsic

¹Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," Theological Investigations, Vol. IV (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), p. 225.

²Ibid.

³Gelpi, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 234.

⁵Karl Rahner, Church and Sacraments, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), p. 37, 38.

and mutual causal relationship; the symbolized posits its own identity and existence by manifesting itself in symbol, which is distinct from itself.¹ Symbol is the cause, then, of what it signifies by being the way in which what is signified effects itself. Rahner designates the causality proper to symbol as that of formal cause.² It is important to note that symbol in the sense of which Rahner speaks, is that, in the formation of which, being comes to be.

Being is symbolic both in constituting itself and in presencing itself to others.³ Being projects itself to the other with a double effect, as it were. On the one hand it constitutes itself in and as being and thereby comes to a possession of self in knowledge and love. In this sense, Being is symbolic in itself.⁴ On the other hand, through this (symbolic) self-expression to otherness, it becomes present to others.⁵ Through the process of symbolic self-expression, there is achieved a presencing to self (self-acceptance), and a presencing of self to the other.

¹Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, op. cit., p. 224.

²Ibid., p. 231.

³Ibid., p. 230-231.

⁴Ibid., p. 230.

⁵Ibid., p. 231.

The illustrations which Rahner uses to explain symbol in this sense are helpful. The giving of the form by the formal cause brings about the reality which is formed.¹ The external manifestation of the substantial form (or cause) while different from the form, manifests that form by its very difference. It is a symbol which is created by that which is symbolized (formal cause) as its own self-realization. In this symbol, what is symbolized--the form--is present. It is responsible for bringing about the other by imparting to it the reality which the form itself has. We could say then that the formal cause is its self-expression whereby it constitutes itself.²

A second illustration is that of 'resultance'.³ Thomas holds for an inner self-realization of the essence prior to any secondary or subsequent actions which the essence may perform. The substance, through the self-projection or self-expression that are its faculties, constitutes itself in being. The action whereby the subject expresses itself in the 'outflowing of the faculties' is both constitutive of its essence and symbolic.

¹Ibid., p. 231, 232.

²Ibid., p. 232.

³Ibid., p. 232-4.

In the case of the species of material things, these realities express themselves as 'potential perceptible' objects, prior to any actual perceiving process in which they are being engaged. Self-expression, here a 'passive' reality (their self-expression renders them capable of being perceived), is the means whereby they constitute themselves in being.¹

Perhaps the last example Rahner uses is most helpful: man himself. The soul of man is present in him by way of formal or symbolic causality. By communicating itself to the prime matter that is its potential, the soul brings about or effects the body-soul combination.²

At this point, it will be useful to examine the manner Rahner used to arrive at the concept of being as symbolic.

To reach the primary concept of symbol, we must start from the fact that all beings . . . are multiple, and are or can be essentially the expression of another in this unity of the multiple and the one, in this plurality by reason of its plural unity.³

Rahner explains that individual beings possess unity because, as individual, they are one. Individual beings are multiple because, as finite, they are not possessed of absolute simplicity. Plurality, Rahner

¹Ibid., p. 234.

²Ibid., p. 245-47.

³Ibid., p. 225, 226.

indicates, need not simply imply limitation.¹ It is a source of perfection as well--witness the multiplicity of the most perfect Being who is Three in One.² Man is at the same time one and multiple, and this multiplicity is precisely the path through which oneness is achieved.³

Being expresses self in many ways, many times, to many objects. Yet underlying the plurality of expression is the unity of the being itself.⁴ Being is a dynamic not a static concept. To be itself, being goes out of self both to discover what it itself is, and to express that which it is. A man is a person only by functioning through all of his multiple forms of self-expression as a person. So doing, he both expresses and realizes manhood. In point of fact, Rahner notes, the purpose of this self-disclosure in plurality is the viewing, realization, possession or awareness of the self as one, the recognition of the underlying unity.⁵ Being then, to achieve fulfillment, goes forth in plurality and thereby realizes itself in unity.

Being as such, and hence as one (ens as unum) for the fulfillment of its being, and unity, emerges into a plurality--of which the supreme mode is the Trinity.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 229.

²Ibid., p. 228.

³Ibid., p. 225-6.

⁴Ibid., p. 229.

⁵Ibid., p. 229.

⁶Ibid., p. 228.

Since self-realization is achieved in this fashion, each being is symbolic--i.e., it expresses itself in symbol in order to attain its own nature. This self-constituting act is the condition for possession of self in knowledge and love. Self-possession, becoming self, takes place in the measure in which a being realizes itself in constituting itself in plurality. "Being is of itself symbolic because it necessarily expresses itself."¹ Inasmuch as all being expresses itself in plurality and possesses itself in so doing, all being is symbolic.

The self-constitutive act whereby a being constitutes itself as a plurality which leads to its fulfillment, or rather (in certain circumstances) which is a reality given with the perfection of the being, is, however, the condition of possibility of possession of self in knowledge and love.²

To summarize, Rahner treats of symbol from the formal ontological perspective. From this perspective he understands symbol to be the self-expression of a being whereby that being constitutes itself in being. It is the self-realization of that being in the other which is constitutive of its essence. It is at the same time the means of self-possession and self-projection to the other. Between the two realities, the symbol and the symbolized, there exists an intrinsic and mutual causation, whereby the symbolized posits its own identity and existence. The

¹Ibid., p. 229.

²Ibid., p. 229.

symbol is the cause (formal) of what it signifies by being the way what is symbolized effects itself. In material things, this self-realization takes place by means of 'the constitution of the expression which springs forth from the essence'.¹

With this understanding of symbol in mind, one can turn to the question: What is the function of symbol as conceived by Rahner.

B. Function of Symbol

For Rahner, symbol's prime function would be to serve as the means whereby all being in general and man in particular constitute themselves in being and come to self-realization and self-acceptance. The symbolic self-expression thus conceived serves as necessary means for all there is, to come to be.²

Secondly, symbol is the highest primal representation in which one reality renders another present--the representation which allows the other to be there. This function is that of most perfectly enabling a being to be present. In this form of representation, the symbolized in some way "presences" itself through the symbol so that the symbolic actions are 'caused by the symbolized' through a quasi formal causality.³

¹Ibid., p. 234.

²Ibid., 234. Cf. also p. 229.

³Ibid., p. 252.

A third function of symbol may be cited. Symbol is the reality in which another attains knowledge of a being. A being is known in actuation. Knowability and actual knowledge of a being depend on the degree of actuality present in the thing to be known itself. "A being can be and is known insofar as it is ontologically symbolic (in itself) because it is ontologically symbolic (for itself)."¹

. . . As a being realizes itself in its own intrinsic otherness (which is constitutive of his being), retentive of its intrinsic plurality as its derivative, hence congruous expression, it makes itself known. This derivative and congruous expression, constitutive of each being, is the symbol which comes in addition from the object of knowledge in the knower--"in addition only"--because it is already initially present in the depths of the grounds of each one's being. The being is known in this symbol without which it cannot be known at all. Thus it is the symbol in the original, transcendental sense of the word.²

We might then indicate that for Rahner symbol is a most important element. Being itself, its most perfect form in the Trinity down to its lowest manifestation, is symbolic, symbol being the vehicle for self-realization, self-constitution. Symbol is that which renders a being knowable and known.

Having traced in bold strokes the general outline for an understanding of symbol at this level, Rahner at

¹Ibid., p. 230-231.

²Ibid., p. 232.

one point designates a specific function for symbol which is most apropos and enlightening for the purposes of this study:

"... the concept of symbol ... is an essential, key concept in all theological treatises, without which it is impossible to have a correct understanding of the subject matter of the various treatises, in themselves and in relation to other treatises."¹

Secondly, Rahner draws forth the principle that "God's salvific action on man from its first foundation to its completion always takes place in such a way that God himself is the reality of salvation, because salvation is given to man and grasped by him in the symbol." This symbol does not represent an absent and merely promised reality, but exhibits the reality, i.e. God, as something present by means of the symbol formed by it. Rahner paints a bold picture for symbol in general and theological sense.²

C. Role of Symbol in the Thought of Karl Rahner

It must be noted at this point that Rahner is maintaining a central role for symbol in both his philosophic and theological presentation.

Secondly, commentators agree that one cannot understand the theology of Karl Rahner without understanding his philosophy.³

¹Ibid., p. 245.

²Ibid., p. 245.

³Fiorenza, Spirit in the World, op. cit., XIX; Kenneth Baker, Introduction, op. cit.,

For these two reasons, a somewhat extended examination of his philosophic writings, Geist in Welt and Horers des Wortes, will be undertaken.

Thence, an examination will be made within the theological domain itself to uncover the use of symbol there.

A transcendentalist in the tradition of Marechal, Rahner seeks the a priori conditions which govern man's existence in the world. He begins with the metaphysical question which he describes as follows:

... The metaphysical question is that question which in a final and radical sharpening of man's questioning turns upon itself as such and thereby turns upon the pre-suppositions which are operative in itself; it is the question turned consciously upon itself--the transcendental question, which does not merely place something asked about in question, but the one questioning and his question itself, and thereby absolutely everything.¹

For Rahner, knowing involves the being present to self of an existent.² The beingness then, or intensity of being of an existent according to Thomas, is measured by that being's possibility of being present to itself. This implies that knowing essentially involves subjectivity--is subjectivity. From being as a single source come both knowing and being known. Thus being 'grounds the intrinsic possibility of an antecedent essential intrinsic relation of both to each other'.³ Knowing, Rahner concludes, is the

¹Spirit in the World, op. cit., p. 58.

²Ibid., p. 69, 97.

³Ibid., p. 69.

subjectivity of being itself, as the being present to the self of being.¹

Knowledge of the sensible other through sensibility entails a process whereby the knower expresses self in otherness.

The knower which has the other as the proper object of its intuition must from the outset according to the principle of the identity of knowing and what is known--first have entered into otherness . . . into matter in order that such an intuition of another as such could be possible at all.²

In sensible knowledge, the sensible species is in reality the self-realization of the object, in the medium of sensibility.³ This self-realization consists in the object's potentiality of being known.

The a priori structure of sensibility includes time and space,⁴ since the mobile is the most universal a priori of sensibility and it includes these two elements. Therefore, time and space will be the a priori forms of pure sensibility.⁵ Since sensibility is the act of matter, the a priori norm for its possible objects is determined in the light of its being quantitative.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 70.

²Ibid., p. 82.

³Ibid., p. 89.

⁴Ibid., p. 101.

⁵Ibid., p. 101.

⁶Ibid., p. 102.

Sensibility's most basic faculty is imagination.¹ For Thomas, imagination is not simply a faculty for gathering impressions into a whole, but the supporting ground of the possibility of these impressions insofar as it lets the external senses flow from itself through a natural emanation.² It is pure intuition of unlimited spatiality.³

The phantasm is the act of the imagination as source of sensibility whose a priori forms are space and time. It is to the act of such an imagination that the conversion of the intellect takes place.⁴

Speaking of time as part of the a priori structure of sensibility, Thomas notes, and Rahner with him, that the mobile as existent has the totality of the realization of its potentials, and each individual one as well, still ahead of it as future, and secondly is in motion toward it. Such an existent is temporal.⁵

Rahner then discusses abstraction, beginning first with the definition or description of intellect, which is:

. . . capacity of the one human knowledge to place the other which is given in sensibility away from itself and in question, to judge it, to objectify it and thereby to make the knower a subject for the first time, that is, one who is present to himself, and not to the other,

¹Ibid., p. 103.

²Ibid., p. 106.

³Ibid., p. 106.

⁴Ibid., p. 107.

⁵Ibid., p. 107.

one who knowingly exists in himself. For Thomas, this possibility of complete return to self is metaphysically the most decisive characteristic of intellect as opposed to sensibility.¹

In Thomistic metaphysics, abstraction is the liberation of the subject from "sensibility's abandonment to the other of the world". Conversion to the phantasm is turning to the world which has become objective.² The universal concept, product of abstraction, is a known intelligibility which exists in many and can be predicated of many. In the universal concept, being as such is apprehended of many possible existents.³ Conversion is precisely the reference of the universal to a "this".⁴ Referring to the Thomistic theses, Rahner maintains that intellectually there are only universal concepts, and the universal concept is known only in a conversion to the phantasm.⁵ The return of the knowing subject to himself and the liberation of a universal from its subject is one and the same process.⁶ Accordingly, abstraction as acquisition of the universal concept is the realization of this return of the subject to himself.

¹Ibid., p. 118.

²Ibid., p. 119.

³Ibid., p. 120.

⁴Ibid., p. 121.

⁵Ibid., p. 121.

⁶Ibid., p. 123.

Next, Rahner discusses the affirmative synthesis:

... the universal concept ... is distinguished from the judgment in which it is the predicate, not as a part from the whole, into which the concepts (subject, predicate) are pieced together only subsequently to their own intrinsic constitution but as a possible from an actually realized synthesis of subject and predicate.¹

Commenting, he indicates that objective knowledge is given only when a knower relates a universal known intelligibility to a supposit existing in itself.² This is so since sensibility knows materially and concretely and is therefore only knowledge of the individual: "Whatever then the intellect designates as subsisting, it designates in a concretion."³ Man always knows through a certain synthesis and this synthesis (complexio) takes place through affirmation or negation.⁴

Rahner notes that the essence of human knowledge consists in the fact that man is

... present to himself as himself, since in relating the universal known intelligibility to something and in judging about something, he differentiates himself from this something. But it is only in this differentiation over against another that he is present to himself in knowing self-possession.⁵

¹Ibid., p. 123.

²Ibid., p. 125.

³Ibid., p. 127.

⁴Ibid., p. 128.

⁵Ibid., p. 133.

The next item that Rahner discusses is the agent intellect as the a priori condition of possibility of knowability of a material form.¹ This power was posited by Thomas to make what was potentially intelligible actually so by abstracting the species of things from matter and from individuating conditions.² It is the agent intellect which gains knowledge of the confinement of form by matter.³

The agent intellect is rather the capacity to know the sensibly intuited as limited, as a realized concretion and only to that extent does it "universalize" the form possessed sensibly, only to that extent does it liberate the form from its material connection.⁴

The agent intellect is pre-apprehension (Vorgriff), the movement of the spirit towards the whole of its possible objects.⁵ Against this horizon of universal being, which is preapprehended, the intellect abstracts forms, concretized in sensibility, by knowing their limitation by reason of the realized synthesis of sensibility. It does this by comprehending the breadth of their possibilities in a pre-apprehension.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 136.

²Ibid., p. 137.

³Ibid., p. 140.

⁴Ibid., p. 142.

⁵Ibid., p. 145.

⁶Ibid., p. 146.

In discussing the judgment, Rahner approves of Thomas' position that the judgment which attains to an in-itself attains to esse. The truth of propositions is nothing other than the truth of the intellect. The intellect attains to being, not to truth of propositions.¹ Essences are the expression of the limitations of esse which is limitless in se. Essences no longer stand unrelated to one another--but all are related to the one esse and esse is not the emptiest but the fullest concept.² His conclusion: the absolute scope of the in-itself intended in the judgment coincides with the scope of esse. Esse then is the in-itself of the reality apprehended in the judgment.³ "Insofar as esse is apprehended in the judgment as something of many quiddities, it is essentially apprehended as universal."⁴

Esse is further spoken of as universal esse in formal and transcategorical unity.⁵ The universality of a material, essential form consists in the fact it can be repeated in many material subjects, as the same form. Universality of esse also appears as repeatability insofar as many of the same can really be; insofar as many concrete

¹Ibid., p. 158.

²Ibid., p. 162.

³Ibid., p. 163.

⁴Ibid., p. 173.

⁵Ibid., p. 174.

instances of the same quiddity are apprehended as existing.¹ The universality of esse manifests itself in yet another way: it is the one realizing ground of many essential determinations, the ground of all real determinations.² It is also the fulness of all possible determinations, absolutely. For in every judgment, a knowledge of the same esse is simultaneously known.

Discussing esse as absolute esse, Rahner indicates that the reality of God as absolute esse is implicitly affirmed simultaneously, in the breadth of the pre-apprehension of esse commune.³ The apprehension of the real limitation of an existent has as its condition pre-apprehension of esse in which act the preapprehension of absolute esse implicitly and simultaneously occurs.⁴ This esse attained in preapprehension is an absolute negative infinity.⁵

It is because human knowledge as preapprehending is ordered to what is absolutely infinite that man is spirit. He always has this infinite only in the preapprehension--hence he is finite spirit. Man is spirit because he finds himself situated before being in its totality

¹Ibid., p. 174.

²Ibid., p. 174-175.

³Ibid., p. 181.

⁴Ibid., p. 182.

⁵Ibid., p. 186.

which is infinite.¹ Man, Rahner notes, knows absolute esse in that he experiences his movement toward esse.

The agent intellect liberates the quiddity from sensibility by abstracting the esse from the concrete existent in the preapprehension.² In the first level of abstraction, universal esse is extracted. The quantitative is abstracted from the qualitative in the second; in the third, the transcendental determinations which belong to an existent absolutely are removed.³ Rahner then speaks of the third level of abstraction as a moment in the judgment; of the agent intellect as exclusive power of forming metaphysical judgments,⁴ indicating that the decisive abstractions of metaphysical determinations takes place in the judgment.⁵

If the esse reveals itself in preapprehension which is conditio of the possibility of judgment and if esse is abstracted in the judgment and the power of such abstraction is the agent intellect, then the agent intellect is to be defined as the power which preapprehends esse absolutely.⁶

The essence of the agent intellect is the apprehension of esse.⁷ Like a light it both is seen in the

¹Ibid., p. 186.

²Ibid., p. 187.

³Ibid., p. 188.

⁴Ibid., p. 192.

⁵Ibid., p. 200.

⁶Ibid., p. 201.

⁷Ibid., p. 208.

object and is that which a priori makes it possible for the object to be seen.¹ This agent intellect apprehends the individual determination of sensibility (phantasm) in its dynamic ordination to the totality of all possible objects, to esse and hence it apprehends this determination as being.² The essence and operation of the agent intellect: "it is the spontaneous preapprehension of esse absolutely and thereby the faculty which apprehends the universal."³ Agent intellect, he concludes further, is the highest faculty of man: "the metaphysical point at which the finite spirit comes upon his openness to and his dependence upon God."⁴ Absolute esse is affirmed in every act of the agent intellect, in every judgment.⁵

Discussing the possible intellect, Rahner notes:

If the agent intellect is the spontaneous dynamic ordination of the human spirit to esse absolutely, . . . then the possible intellect as intellect is the potentiality of the human spirit to comprehend esse absolutely in receptive knowledge . . .⁶

For Rahner, essence of the possible intellect is:

"that being which is present to itself in the knowledge

¹Ibid., p. 211.

²Ibid., p. 225.

³Ibid., p. 225.

⁴Ibid., p. 225.

⁵Ibid., p. 226.

⁶Ibid., p. 242.

of another.¹ ". . . It is the spirit which of itself exists in potency to be actually present to itself."²

Rahner states that if the "spirit as specifically human requires sensibility then it must produce this of itself by way of formal causality since as itself it is and can be thought of only with sensibility".³ Intellect is the origin which lets sensibility emanate; sensibility is the receptive origin of the intellect.⁴

Conversion to the phantasm is the illumination of the phantasm by the agent intellect's light, through which the abstraction is already accomplished. Conversion to the phantasm and abstraction are moments of a single process and are inseparably related to each other 'in a relationship of reciprocal priority'.⁵

As a transcendent apprehension of absolute esse, the actuality of the spirit is a becoming, a dynamic orientation to the totality of its objects.⁶ Insofar as the sensibility is the receptive origin of the spirit, a

¹Ibid., p. 244.

²Ibid., p. 247.

³Ibid., p. 252.

⁴Ibid., p. 260-261.

⁵Ibid., p. 266.

⁶Ibid., p. 281.

conversion to the phantasm is always already accomplished since being in its totality is had only in a sentient, intuitive possession of world.¹

Freedom can be visualized as transcending sensibility in its origin from spirit.² Transcendence beyond the other of sensibility which is the return of the spirit to itself can be called Thomistically, the freedom of the spirit.³

Now that the epistemological process has been set forth in summary fashion, one can examine the role that Rahner's understanding of the real symbol plays in it. The first observation which might be made is that in the light of Rahner's understanding of symbol, the transcendental method itself can be termed a study of man's symbolic self-expression, an analysis of symbol as process.

In the transcendental analytic method, in seeking to discover the way it is possible for one to know, one observes the self-expression of man, the asking of the metaphysical question, and probes the metaphysical a priori structures prerequisite for the asking of the question.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 286.

²Ibid., p. 291.

³Ibid., p. 295.

⁴Baker, op. cit., p. 5.

A second conclusion to be derived is that in his exposé of how man knows in order to uncover who and what man is, Rahner is at several points dependent upon his notion of the real symbol. The subject, in symbol (self-expression in materiality) encounters object in symbol. In other words, symbol designates the process of both subject and object whereby they render themselves respectively knowing and knowable. A third conclusion and a crucial one may be stated very simply: Because Rahner is able to see the self-expression of the being in materiality as real symbol, he can maintain that the phantasm (self-expression of the object in materiality as capable of being known), is the object.

When the agent intellect grasps or perceives the phantasm (conversio ad phantasmata) from the horizon of Being itself (Vorgriff), what is seen against that backdrop of universal being is not the phenomenon, but the noumenon itself, the noumenon in its symbolic self-expression in materiality. The judgment then, affirms, not that this object "appears as intentional being", but rather "this object IS". The importance of this factor cannot be overestimated. It is precisely because of symbol's character of constituting the self-expression of the being itself, that Rahner can contend that the judgment attains being. Man in making judgmental affirmations, is making judgments not about appearances, but about reality,

not about phenomena but noumena, not about intentional being but about actual being. One could conclude that it is symbol as the self-expression of the being, constitutent of that being and rendering it present, that saves Karl Rahner's epistemology from Kantian idealism.

Hearers of the Word

Hearers of the Word asks the question: Is revelation possible from the standpoint of man.¹ Continuing the process of transcendental analysis begun in Spirit in the World, Rahner notes that in addition to man's being a quiddity whose essential structures manifest quantity and quality, he further has as a priori conditions of his subjectivity both a social and an historical structure.

Because man is spirit, he is open to transcendence or being itself. Because from the viewpoint of transcendental analysis being and knowing are one, transcendence is communicable.² This communication takes form of word, or speech.

Being is luminous, is Logos, and can thus be revealed in the word . . . But man is spirit . . . and thus has an ear that is open to any word whatsoever that may proceed from the mouth of the eternal.³

¹Karl Rahner, Hearers of the Word (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 51, 52.

³Ibid., p. 68.

Precisely because man is not simply spirit but spirit in the world, it follows that the spirit possesses its openness to being in general (and even to the absolute being of God) only in and through the possibility of an encounter with materially existent things in time and space; in other words, man is an historical being.¹

Man then must look for a revelation from God upon a ground upon which he is already standing: the ground of transcendence as historicity.²

Man's a priori metaphysical subjectivity includes a social dimension since the human spirit is limited essential act of one of many individuals who constitute the human species. These individuals must communicate through the material symbols of speech and cultural artifacts their own self-revelation through space and time to other beings similarly so constituted. Again, as form received in matter, a self-determining human subject must of necessity work out its self-perfection through acts of knowledge and free decision which because of their external dependence on matter share successiveness proper to events in the world of space and time. At the same time, there is a personal uniqueness and unpredictability which is present because of the intrinsic independence of matter

¹Ibid., p. 133.

²Ibid., p. 149.

which the self-determining being possesses. Consequently, man's choices, by reason of this uniqueness and personal character, possess an aspect of historicity and history is one of the essential structures of consciousness of Geist in Welt. If a revelation is to take place, God has to utilize sensible symbol or word, spatio-temporally perceptible event which will carry his message to man. Obviously, such an event, appearing in history, would be a unique historical event.¹

Whatever its origin, the revelation of God must in the end be translated into human speech if man is not to be completely taken out of his human context by it. To grasp revelation, man has to refer back at least to certain special points in his own history as an historical memory. It is only necessary that he is able to recognize that a true revelation has been given at this point in human history.² Turning towards history then to discover a possible revelation is imposed upon him by his specifically human spirituality.³ Breaking away from history would be an inner contradiction of his spiritual nature, as Geist in

¹Ibid., p. 159.

²Ibid., p. 158-159.

³Ibid., p. 159-160.

Welt.¹ Again, man himself is the 'appearance' with the greatest fulfillment in itself; but what man is itself only appears in the unfolded reality of possible human being within the history of man in general, in the history of humanity. If man then is to stand attentive to the God who freely reveals himself, it must be in human history if at all.²

Another element to be considered is the freedom of man. Man can be open or closed to the revelation of God. The freedom of man Rahner roots in the complete return to self that is entailed in the act of human judgment. By accomplishing complete return to self in his thought judgment, man is able to act freely upon it as one freer than it. His thought process transcends sensibility. As Rahner puts it:

The methodical, reflective making explicit in an act of knowledge of this transcendence . . . is the first part of an ontology of the *potentia obedientialis* of a possible revelation.³

In Hearers of the Word, then, Rahner builds upon the understanding of man which was enunciated in Geist in Welt. He examines man as he is, spirit in the world, and finds him a being constituted in space and time, hence in historicity, endowed with a preconcept of absolute

¹Ibid., p. 160.

²Ibid., p. 161.

³Ibid., p. 67.

being by which he knows both his own contingency and absolute being. By virtue of the preconcept, man is placed before God as that God who may still undertake free action towards man. The freedom of God is retained intact. Therefore, the spirit of man possesses its openness to being in general only in and through the possibility of an encounter with materially existent things in time and place through its penetration of materia.

Rahner states:

... man is the existent thing, possessing a spirituality that is receptive and open to history who stands in freedom and as freedom before the God of a possible revelation which, if it occurs, appears in his history (as the supreme actualization of that history) in the word. Man is the one who listens in his history for the word of the free God. Only thus is he what he must be. Metaphysical anthropology has reached its conclusion when it has comprehended itself as the metaphysics of a *potentia obedientialis* for the revelation of a supernatural god.¹

An important conclusion for this section is found in the fact that the self-communication for which man lies in wait, is itself a symbolic self-communication of the transcendent God. The symbolic elements then used by Rahner to articulate his understanding of the self-communication of God to man are significant. Hearers of the Word proposes that man in his contingency awaits the symbolic self-communication of the creator God. One can also say that man, in the Vorgriff has the task of holding

¹Ibid., p. 162.

himself forth in symbolic freedom and openness, to the reception of a possible revelation of the free God. Man's self-expression itself entails essentially a receptivity of a positive revelation of God in history.

Symbol and the Theology of Karl Rahner

If symbol plays so important a role in Rahner's anthropology, as reflected in the Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word, it is not cause for wonder that Rahner the theologian affirms it to be a "key, essential concept", a sine qua non for the understanding of all theological treatises in themselves and in their relationship to one another.¹ Another insight important for this study is Rahner's statement that he conceives God's salvific action from start to finish to involve God's symbolic self-communication--God's presence to man through symbol.² Selected themes will be examined in an attempt to analyze the role of symbol in Rahner's theology. The first will be that of mystery.

Rahner turns to the doctrine of God's incomprehensibility and asks what meaning symbol has in theological parlance.

If God is directly seen as the infinite and incomprehensible, and if the beatific vision be the permanent expression of the inexpressible and

¹Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, op. cit., p. 245.

²Ibid., p. 245.

nameless, then . . . vision must mean grasping and being grasped by the mystery, and the supreme act of knowledge is not the abolition or diminution of the mystery but its final assertion, its eternal and total immediacy.¹

Mystery in theological terms is a positive quality attaching itself to being. Speaking of grace, Rahner maintains, we are speaking not of the elimination of mystery but the "radical possibility of the absolute mystery's proximity."² Grace, he notes further, is the nearness of abiding mystery.³ Far from being a limitation on knowledge it becomes "an intrinsic constituent of the very notion of knowledge".

Rahner, having made these observations, goes on to say that there are three mysteries stricte dicta in Christianity: the trinity, the incarnation, and God's self communication in grace and glory.⁴ The latter two mysteries, the incarnation and the self-communication of God to man in grace and glory are related in that in both instances there is reference to God's going outside himself in self-communication.⁵ He notes further that they have in common the fact that they involve the self-communication

¹Ibid., p. 41.

²Ibid., p. 55.

³Ibid., p. 56.

⁴Ibid., p. 64, 65.

⁵Ibid., p. 65-66.

of God not in terms of efficient causality but in terms of formal causality.¹ (The term which Rahner uses is 'quasi formal causality' to designate the quality of the causality as formal while retaining cognoscence of the fact that God and creature are involved, there is no change on the part of God). This notion of quasi-formal causality involves not the bestowal of something distinct from God but rather God himself.

Here God communicates himself in his own person to the creature, as absolute holy mystery. We can therefore affirm at once with certainty that the two mysteries of incarnation and grace are simply the mysteriously radical form of the mystery which we have shown to be the primordial one . . .: God as the holy and abiding mystery for the creature and in both these cases, not in the guise of distant aloofness but in that of radical proximity.²

This statement poses no problem with regard to the incarnation. God himself rather than God's gift is imparted here. With regard to God's communication in grace and glory, further development is required.

Medieval theology concentrated on created grace, stressed it in discussing the communication of God to man. The resultant reification of grace had unfortunate implications in the history of theology. However, even during medieval times, in the articulation of the doctrine on the beatific vision, it was noted that this reality

¹Ibid., p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 67.

was seen as taking place through the self-communication of God in the form of a kind of formal causality.¹ In other words, the immediacy and proximity implied by the notion of the beatific vision demanded such a self-communication in formal causality as a presupposition. Rahner indicates that if this be true of glory, it must be true of grace also which is the prelude to the beatific vision.² Therefore in Rahner's understanding of grace and glory, God's direct self-communication (uncreated grace) takes priority.

Continuing his reflections, Rahner states that the hypostatic union also is a self-communication of God to creature, precisely as he is holy mystery.³ He notes that the substantial unity of the Word of God with his human nature was such that the human nature is primarily constituted by God's giving himself to that which is other than self. He constitutes this created being by taking it up as spirit. Hence the union itself of the created spirit with the Word, is essentially one of awareness and is brought about as fully itself in the human knowledge of the created spirit of its unity with the word.⁴ Therefore

¹Ibid., p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 66.

³Ibid., p. 68-69.

⁴Ibid., p. 68.

the presence of the Logos to the human soul in the beatific vision is not a supplement to the hypostatic union but essentially an ontological element in it.¹

Were one to start with the self-transcendence of the created spirit, one could, Rahner maintains, show that its culmination lies in the hypostatic union, salva reverentia for the gratuitousness of the operation and the grace required. In this framework, the hypostatic union becomes the absolute ontological and existential self-surrender to the holy mystery which is God.²

Rahner notes that so fully has God given himself in his absolute self-communication to the creature that the immanent Trinity becomes and is the trinity of the economy of salvation and the Trinity of salvation which we experience is the immanent Trinity.³ Again, the trinity of God's relationship to us is the reality of God as he is himself--a Trinity of persons, and this immanent Trinity encounters us in faith:

The absolute self-communication of God to the world as the mystery which has drawn nigh is the Father as the absolutely primordial and underivative; it is the son, as the principle which itself acts and necessarily must act in history in view of this free self-communication; it is the Holy Spirit as that which is given and accepted by us.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 68.

²Ibid., p. 69.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 70.

Since the self-communication of God in himself is involved, it is always one and the same God who is unoriginated origin of supernatural self-communication and God as principle, himself acting and expressing himself in the world.

The three mysteries, the Trinity with its two processions and the two self-communications of God ad extra in a real, formal causality, corresponding to the two processions, are not intermediate mysteries . . . they signify the articulation of the one single mystery of God, being the radical form of his one comprehensive mysteriousness since it has been revealed in Christ Jesus that this absolute and abiding mystery can exist not only in the guise of distant aloofness, but also as absolute proximity to us, through the divine self-communication. The mysteries of Christianity in the plural, can then be understood as the concrete form of the one mystery, once the presupposition is made . . . that this holy mystery also exists and can exist as the mystery in absolute proximity.¹

In his articulation of mystery, Rahner has illustrated his two principles regarding the place of symbol in the theological undertaking. He has indeed made use of the framework of symbolic self-communication of God as the base for his articulation of the relationship of the Triune God to man.² He has done this in terms of presence, presence of God by means of his symbol--his self-communication to constitute self in the immanent Trinity, and then to render that same immanent Trinity knowable in the self expression to the creature. In so

¹Ibid., p. 72.

²Ibid., p. 245.

doing he has shown the interconnectedness of the doctrines on the Immanent Trinity, the Economic Trinity, uncreated grace, hypostatic union and beatific vision in such wise that their interdependence and interconnected relationships and meanings become apparent.¹ In the process, each of these elements becomes clearer and more precisely refined in our understanding of the whole, and the perspective of the whole is retained on a sound base by its being cast in terms of mystery--the awesome presence of the mysterious God.

A second theme which may be examined to assess the role of symbol in the theology of Karl Rahner, is that of Christology. For Rahner, theology of the Logos is strictly a Theology of symbol.² The perfect self image of a being is acquired through the cumulated self-expressions in experience and reflection--this is the real symbol of the being. The Father forms such a perfect self-expression in the Logos and in accepting self gives of himself in full energy as Spirit. The Father then, for reasons not to be pursued at the present time, chose to go outside the divinity. This self-expression in materiality must be through the Logos, must be the Logos himself.³ If the self-expression is to be responded to in kind, then it must be

¹Ibid., p. 94.

²Ibid., p. 235.

³Ibid., p. 239.

to a creature possessing intelligence and will. If it is to be an expression in kind, then it is also necessarily to a free creature.¹

The incarnation then, for Rahner is at the same time the highest act of creation, motivating force behind creation and in some way, the paradigm for the apex of creation, man.

The mysteries of soteriology can undoubtedly be reduced to the mystery of the incarnation; all we have to do is to suppose something which again is not strictly a mystery: that the word of God took on a nature from among the human race which, by the creative will of God, shared in solidarity one common history of salvation and disaster; and that this human nature of Christ was willed . . . as something to be actualized and hence as freely accomplishing the human destiny of life and death. With these presuppositions, which are not strict mysteries, the whole doctrine of the redemption follows from the mystery of the incarnation.²

Man in this perspective appears as the context for incarnational self-communication, and this is not simply man but the whole of the material world and the human milieu.

As the self communication of the Father to the Logos immanently is the Logos, the perfect self expression of the Father, so too the symbolic self-expression of the Father in creaturehood is the Logos incarnated now demonstrated in yet another dimension, yet the same Ipsissimum Verbum.³ If this verbum incarnation is the Logos itself,

¹Ibid., p. 240.

²"The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," op. cit., p. 65.

³"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 238.

he is the very symbol, presence of the Father in the only fashion possible for man in his present state to encounter Father. In the words of Rahner:

The humanity is the self-disclosure of the logos itself so that when God, expressing himself, exteriorizes himself, that very being appears which we call the humanity of the Logos. Thus anthropology itself is finally based on something more than the doctrine of the possibilities open to the infinite creator—who would not however really betray himself when he created. Its ultimate source is the doctrine about God himself, insofar as it depicts that which 'appears' when in his self-exteriorization he goes out of himself into that which is other than he.¹

The human nature of Christ is subsequently that "which comes about when the Logos expresses himself in the region of the non-divine."²

Rahner maintains in this fashion that anthropology finds its basic premise in this symbolic self-communication of the Logos. Every human being is possessed of the same humanity as that of the human Christ. As such every other human is the potential visible symbol of the Divine Logos. In fact, Rahner goes so far as to say: "man is possible because the exteriorization of the Logos is possible".³

For Rahner, the role of the God-man included the establishing of God's intimacy in human history. The incarnation also declared the ultimate union of God with one

¹Ibid., p. 239.

²Ibid., p. 92, footnote 21.

³Ibid., p. 94.

human being and consequently opened the door to the real possibility of union with God for men, this in various degrees. The incarnation further gives real, tangible foundation of or to man's longing for transcendence. This longing is viewed as possible of achievement by man since it was achieved by Christ, one such human. It is at this point that a discussion of man's sanctification could be had in terms of the Indwelling of the Trinity (Uncreated Grace). Rahner builds upon the possibility of explaining the sanctification of man in a fashion parallel to that of Christ. Briefly stated, he asks whether it would not be possible to say that just as the Christ through the symbolic self-expression which was his life gradually became aware of his personhood as united to the Word, so too man, by reason of his symbolic self-expression gradually becomes aware of his personhood as attuned to Being itself, and (with the advent of the explicitation that is revelation in history) God.¹

An examination then of Rahner's Christology reveals that here, as Rahner indicates, it is a question of a symbolic exposition throughout. Using the concept of the real symbol in reference to the Logos, Rahner drives home the point that in encountering the man Christ we are encountering the Logos who is the real symbol of the Father in the

¹Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Vol. 1 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), p. 345.

realm of the human. In encountering Christ, in very fact, one encounters the Father. The divinization of the human dimension is most clearly set forth in this perspective as in the Triune character of the action of God towards man.¹ Because divinity is anchored so firmly in humanity, the theologian can infer, the paradigmatic character of the Christ symbol for man. In his Christological reflections, Rahner has again, through the use of his understanding of the real symbol, been enabled to tie together the humanity of Christ with the sanctification of man, and situate the process within the framework of the self-communication of God. Here too he has explained the salvific action of God in man's regard in terms of presence of God by reason of symbolic self-expression.

Another important theme in Karl Rahner is that of the supernatural existential. Rahner finds the concept of creation in the natural state and extrinsic elevation to grace an artificial conception.² God's decree to man entailing so fundamental an orientation of his being towards God is not to be described in terms reminiscent of a juridical decree.³ Pursuing the nature grace problem from his revelational theological perspective, Rahner views

¹Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, op. cit., p. 239.

²Theological Investigations, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 298, 303.

³Ibid., p. 300.

man's supernatural destiny as part of the divine plan and simultaneous to the decision by God to create.¹ To conceive of things otherwise is to anthropomorphise, to conceive of God as lacking foreknowledge, or better, his being indecisive. In the extrinsic formulation, elevation is almost an afterthought and an unreal temporal or successive type of existence is predicated of the Triune God.²

Rahner would then maintain that the self-communication of God is the cause of creation. Consequent upon the decision to communicate self through creation, he sees the supernatural end of man as the first in intention. If it was first in intention, then, he reasons, man from the beginning must be other than he would have been in the absence of such an orientation. Man's nature itself must have an orientation towards, or relationship to grace. Man's concrete nature must have a basic God-ward orientation which seems to imply more than an obediential potency.

Man should be able to receive the Love which is God himself; he must have a congeniality for it. He must be able to accept it (and hence grace, the beatific vision) as one who has room and scope, understanding and desire for it. Thus he must have a real potency for it. He must have it always. He is indeed someone always addressed and claimed by this love. For as he now in fact is, he is created for it; he is thought and called into being so that Love might bestow itself. To the extent this potency is what is

¹Ibid., p. 302, 303.

²Ibid., p. 310.

called into being inmost and authentic in him, the center and root of what he is absolutely.¹

Supernatural existential is the term which Rahner uses to describe that aspect of man whereby he is oriented Godward in his nature, yet so oriented that a gratuitousness is part thereof.² In other words, man is possessed of an a priori structure (as gift) for the supernatural possibilities which are his. The term 'existential' is used, seemingly a Heideggerian borrowing, to designate a structure of consciousness which man de facto possesses but of which he is unaware and may never become aware. These possibilities are in man awaiting man's acceptance in awareness. The fashion in which awareness is created varies, involving among other things the preaching and the living of the word by others. Yet one can only decide on his supernatural possibilities by grace. They are there not because of human nature--they are gift. Yet they are present in concrete existent human nature, wherever this is present. In this conception, it may be helpful to note, grace is not an intermittent gift but is a continuous offering.³

This conception might very briefly benefit by situation in the context of other of Rahner's positions. Analyzing man in Geist in Welt, Rahner concludes that man's

¹Ibid., p. 302-303.

²Ibid., p. 313.

³Ibid., p. 377.

preapprehension of an absolute horizon of being is in reality a preapprehension of Absolute being.¹ Though philosophically one speaks of Absolute being, Transcendence or Whither of transcendence, theologically, this basic openness of man is towards the Triune God who, prior to faith, or revelation, is veiled.

Our whole spiritual life is lived in the realm of the salvific will of God of his preventient grace, of his call as it becomes efficacious: all of which is an element within the region of our consciousness, though one which remains anonymous as long as it is not interpreted from without by the message of faith. Even when he does not 'know' it and does not 'believe' it, that is, even when he cannot make it an individual object of knowledge by merely inward reflection, man always lives consciously in the presence of the Triune God of eternal life.²

In this framework the hypostatic union is the most radical actualization and culmination of what is implied in the nature of the finite spirit as such. It is the fulfillment of created self-transcendence.³ The incarnation then, lends concrete base for man's nebulous longings for transcendence by spelling out both in clarity and in hope, that in some mysterious fashion, such longings shall be fulfilled.

¹Spirit in the World, op. cit., p. 117 ff.

²Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, op. cit., p. 180, 181.

³Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Vol. 5 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1967), p. 206. Also Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, op. cit., p. 69.

In his articulation of the supernatural existential, Rahner has once more made extensive use of his conceptions of symbol. Using the self-communicational framework of revelation, he has expanded the scope of gracedness to all mankind, and situated it in the creational act itself. He then has been able because of his transcendental analytic method, to describe this orientation as already present in man as a priori structure, though gifted, and the function of the explicit revelation of God in history, or grace, as having a role which consists more precisely in creating an awareness of realities about the human condition that were already present because already God-given at creation, but which were not in the consciousness of man. A readily comprehensive framework is provided for the operation of grace in the world unbeknownst to man, yet nonetheless active and effective of good.

Through symbol, Rahner has once again shown the interconnectedness of creation, grace, universal salvific will in a perspective which is comprehensible to contemporary man. Again he has proven faithful to his enunciation of the salvific program of God in terms of presence through symbol throughout this facet of his theologizing.

Rahner, in his Theological Dictionary, indicates that the revelational context is the one in which the church can be described in her fundamental nature. He then describes the church:

As people of God socially and juridically organized, the Church is not a mere eternal welfare institute, but the continuation, the perpetual presence of the task and function of Christ in the economy of redemption, his contemporaneous presence in history, his life, the Church in the full and proper sense.¹

In the revelational context, in the context of the God who entered upon the task of self-communication from the moment of creation, the God who placed in man a supernatural existential, the Word of God, the definitive self-communication of Himself, goes forth to create a community of believers. As the word is the explicitation of the self-communication of God to man, and serves to bring to awareness in individual and collective man his Godward orientation which he possessed though did not know of, so too the Church, is to continue this presence of the Word.²

The church then, in Rahner's thinking, incarnates Christ in the world.³ Though juridically constituted, it constitutes for men the absolute symbol of God in the world and serves the same capacity as that of the Word incarnate: by its living and preaching of the word it serves to create an awareness of the God-ward orientation of man which has

¹Church and Sacrament, op. cit., p. 13.

²Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, op. cit., p. 240, 241.

³Ibid., p. 243.

been true all along but to which men have not adverted.¹

As incarnation of Christ in the world, the Church has the task of being Christ to man.² By her lived existence on an individual and collective basis, she is to constitute for men the tangible proof of the eschatologically victorious mercy of Christ, and as such be a sign of hope for man, hope that the ideals of brotherhood and peace and freedom for which he longs, are in fact realizable since they are realized in seed in the Christian community itself. Consequently, in the perspective of Rahner's thought, the role of the church is to continue to effect a presence--the presence of God in the world. The church exists in the highest fulfilment of her nature by teaching, bearing witness to Christ's truth, bearing the cross of Christ through the ages, rendering him present in rite in the sacrifice of the Mass.³ In this sense she is the proto-sacrament--visible sign of the eschatologically victorious grace of God.⁴ By actualizing herself in word and sacrament to her membership and through her sign role to mankind, the church is a grace-effecting presence--she communicates God to man.

¹Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Vol. 2 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), p. 123.

²Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, op. cit., p. 240.

³Church and Sacrament, op. cit., p. 20.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

The church is further an eschatological sign.¹ Concretely manifested in her community must be the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet', the fact that God has shifted the center of man's existence 'out of this world'. All bear the responsibility of witnessing to this 'tension', some assume tasks of being living signs to the 'not yet', the eschatological facet of the Christian's task by the counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Since God's revelation is personal, ongoing and present, the importance attached to dogmatic formulations receives new light. Important and true as they are, they remain limited, partial, incomplete attempts to explain the mysterious transcendent God, who is ex officio hidden, yet near in his remoteness.

The sacraments, are elements which draw or flow forth from the proto-sacrament.

Where the church in her official organized public capacity precisely as the source of redemptive grace, meets the individual in the actual accomplishment of her nature, there we have sacraments in the proper sense, and they can be seen to be the essential functions that bring into activity the very essence of the Church herself.²

Rahner then places the sacraments in the symbolic context of God's self-communication to man in visualizing them as actualizations of the proto-sacrament of the Church which

¹Ibid., p. 13-14.

²Ibid., p. 22.

itself is symbolic presence of Christ who is present through the Logos of the Father communicating self in materiality.

Speaking of the grace causality proper to sacraments, Rahner labels it a 'causation by symbols' of the kind that belongs to what by its very nature is a symbol. In other words, they are causative of grace precisely because in actualizing the Church's nature to the individual they are actualizing her essential role of being real presence of God's grace. "Their efficacy is that of the intrinsic symbol."¹ Grace is conferred precisely by being signified and the existence of the sacrament has its ground in the existence of the church as primal sacrament.² The sacraments then are self-expressions of the church to man.

In his discussions on this theme of Church-sacraments, Rahner has again made extensive use of symbol as the means of articulation of the nature of the church, her role, and the kind of causation of grace she functions, and in the conception he sets forth of sacramentality. Symbol has shown interconnections between incarnation, church, sacraments and individual and collective witness, and facilitated their understanding. Once more, it must be said, the salvific action is effected in terms of presence of God through

¹Ibid., p. 39.

²Ibid., p. 96.

symbol. And once again, the symbolic context for the whole of the theological articulation is that of revelation, the self-communication of God.

Conclusions

An examination of the role of symbol in the theology of Karl Rahner warrants the following conclusions:

First: The understanding of the real symbol as set forth by Rahner is essential to his epistemology. It is the understanding of symbol as the self-expression of a being in otherness whereby it comes to a possession of self in knowledge and love, that enables Rahner to describe the knowing process of man as Spirit in the world. Because symbol renders the noumenon present in the phantasm, the judgment attains objective being (noumenon) rather than intentional being (phenomenon), and knowledge of reality is possible.

Second: The understanding of real symbol is essential to his theological expositions. Through its use, Rahner is able to and does place the entire God-man relationship with the symbolic pattern of the self-communication of God we call revelation. His claim that symbol is essential to the undertaking of theologizing is validated in his own theology, where as he claims, it does serve well to illustrate the interconnectedness of doctrines, and to expose their nature with greater cogency. In agreement with his

avowed premise, he does, in his own work, place the entire salvific process in the context of the presence of God to man through the real symbol.

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF SYMBOL IN THE THOUGHT OF MIRCEA ELIADE

Approach

Mircea Eliade maintains that symbolism must not be viewed as the first step in the growing consciousness of man. To do so is to degrade and to falsify symbol. Symbol is a means by which man communicates; it is an authentic dimension of human knowledge and perception.¹ Western Man, adopting an evolutionary perspective, has precipitously consigned a simplistic label to the locutions of primitive man which are couched in myth and symbol.² Yet to understand the insights of primitive man, one must adopt his mindset, understand the literary forms involved, and then

¹David Rasmussen, "Mircea Eliade Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," Philosophy Today (Summer, 1968), p. 138, 146, 143, 144; Mircea Eliade, Patterns of Comparative Religion, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Meridian Books; New York: World Publishing Company, 1958), p. 10, 33; Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols, trans. Philip Maiut (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), p. 20, 21, 176; Mircea Eliade, Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), p. 192-208.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, ibid., p. 194-5.

render comprehensible to contemporary man, the ideas and the truths which were significant to primitive man. This is a primary principle of Eliade's approach.¹

Using this principle enunciated above, Eliade approaches the religious expression of primitive man, with the perspective of a "hermeneut" rather than with the bias of the demythologizer, or the positivist historical school.²

Examining primitive man's symbolic approach to reality, Eliade notes that there is a tendency on the part of symbol to assimilate more and more sacred phenomena to itself so that more and more of reality will be explained in terms of archetypal fundamental symbols.³ Secondly, he notes that phenomena of a given symbolic type, e.g. symbolic communications of the transcendent in terms of "sky" or "moon", will tend towards a "system".⁴ In other words, individual aspects of reality which are sacred, will be understood more clearly in the light of the archetypal symbol. Archetypal symbols in turn are better understood

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 12; Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 12; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 10; Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, trans. Willard R. Trask (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 165.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 10, 191-192.

³Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 431, 452-453.

⁴Ibid., p. 8-9.

in the light of the "system", that is, the "total system of associations or coherent affirmations of reality which were part of primitive man's world view".¹ This for Eliade means two things. First, primitive man has already begun synthesizing his knowledge into a world view, a "primitive ontology" or a "metaphysics".² Secondly, to secure understanding of the mindset of primitive man, the historian of religions must reconstruct the total "system of associations". Understanding of a sacred phenomenon for the man of traditional societies takes place when it is interpreted from the perspective of primitive man's total world view. Rasmussen terms this a process of morphological classification.³

In more technical terms, Eliade uses a synchronic model for his thinking, i.e. he views language as a total system of inter-relations rather than a diachronic model, which concerns itself with historical change and development within language. Consequently understanding by contemporary man of the positions of primitive man takes place for him through the reintegration of a phenomenon within a system of associations, which is technically termed Eidetic reintegration.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 33.

²Ibid.

³The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 165-166; "Mircea Eliade Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," op. cit., p. 142-143.

⁴"Mircea Eliade Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," op. cit., p. 143.

This position leads Eliade to affirm that the use of the evolutionary model in the history of religions is not universally valid. Simultaneously existing in a given culture will be several phenomena belonging to varying stages of evolutionary development or religious "sophistication". This would pose problems from an evolutionary historical standpoint and in fact brings about criticism of Eliade from anthropologists and historians whose thought rises from such a perspective.¹

For Eliade then, symbol and myth provide the context for a hermeneutic approach. They are basic components of a primary religious language.² This primary language is the authentic vehicle for the communication of the insights of primitive man regarding the meaning he attaches to life, his understanding of the origin of the world and his reflections on reality in general.³ That such insights are expressed in symbol and myth rather than in conceptual categories does not make them the less authentic, the less existentially meaningful, the less true. Form does not negate the truthfulness of the enunciation. Nor does the fact that the

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 10-11; Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History, trans. Willard R. Trask (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 141, 154-155.

²"Mircea Eliade Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," op. cit., p. 145.

³Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 9; Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 3.

symbolic form is not as extensively used in Western civilization give contemporary man the right to deem insignificant the enunciations so expressed.¹

Consequently, Eliade maintains that symbolism is a dimension of human knowledge and communication.² The historian of religions, approaching the religious expression of primitive man, must understand the literary form used by primitive man to comprehend that of which he speaks. He must understand and respect the context, seeking therein the meaning of what is said. Even in traditional times at the primitive level, man, in symbol, began to synthesize his thinking into what Eliade calls "systems". Understanding takes place when one grasps this synthesis.³

Finally it must be said that Eliade in his studies of the religious expression of mankind, takes as his focal point primitive man.⁴ He studies the religious expression of primitive man and in so doing discovers phenomena which

¹Mircea Eliade, "Crisis and Renewal in the History of Religion," (eds. Martin E. Marty and Dean Purmen), New Theology, Vol. IV (New York: McMillan, 1964), p. 30; Mircea Eliade, Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom (trans. Willard R. Trask), Bollingon Series (New York: Rutledge and Kegan Publishing Co., 1958), XIII; XIX.

²Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 10; "Mircea Eliade Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," p. 138.

³"Mircea Eliade Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," p. 143-144.

⁴New Theology, op. cit., p. 24.

appear so universally and profoundly a part of human existence that he raises the question as to whether they are not "part of the human condition" itself.¹

Symbol

Understanding of Symbol in Mircea Eliade

In Patterns of Comparative Religion, Eliade notes:

. . . the term 'symbol' ought to be reserved for the symbols which carry a hierophany further, or themselves constitute a 'revelation' which could not be expressed by any other magico-religious form. . . . However, in the wider sense, anything can be a symbol, or play the part of a symbol.²

Both of these elements are important. Symbol in the strict sense refers to those elements which either constitute a hierophany (revelation, manifestation of the sacred) or which carry a hierophany forward, that is prolong it or extend it in some fashion. Symbol in the wider sense, Eliade notes, refers to the fact that being is so constituted that any being is able to assume a symbolic role. These are two fundamental and most important assertions about symbol for Eliade. Symbol in the strict sense will be the prime object of this study. As to symbol in the wider sense it is suggested that this affirmation implies a receptivity to symbolic insight on the part of

¹The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 165-167; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 12, 176.

²Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 48.

man which is part of the human condition itself.¹

Symbol in the strict sense for Eliade is a vehicle for the communication of the sacred.² The sacred for primitive man was the "authentic", the "really real", the transcendent, the numinous.³ Symbol communicated transcendence as experience not as simple factual knowledge. An instance will illustrate. Eliade describes symbolic communication of the sacred in his description of the sky symbol.

The transcendental quality of 'height' or the supra-terrestrial, the infinite, is revealed to man all at once, to his intellect as to his soul as a whole. The symbolism is an immediate notion of the whole consciousness, of the man, . . . who realizes himself as a man, who recognizes his place in the universe; these primeval revelations are bound up so organically with his life that the same symbolism determines both the activity of his subconscious and the noblest expressions of his spiritual life.⁴

Primitive man saw in such an experience a deeper level of existence presented as most meaningful. The

¹Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, trans. Philip Mairet (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 103, 27, 31; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 433.; Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 135-136.

²The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 129; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 38-39.

³The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 11, 13.

⁴Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 39.

perception to his whole consciousness.¹ Through it man perceived himself to be part of a larger whole, of the universe itself.² He further perceived that universe to have a transcendent meaning, to have itself a transparency.³

Eliade further elaborates upon the manner in which symbol communicated transcendence to man:

Merely contemplating the vault of heaven produces a religious experience in the primitive mind . . . Such contemplation is the same as a revelation. The sky shows itself as it really is: infinite, transcendent. The vault of heaven is, more than anything else, something quite apart from the tiny thing that is man and his span of life. The symbolism of its transcendence derives from the simple realization of its infinite height.⁴

This was the way primitive man perceived transcendence and its symbolic locution could be termed, as it is by Eliade, a wholly different form of cognition.⁵ As

¹The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 129; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 38-39, 269.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 207.

³Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 12, 84, 15, 176; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 10, 11, 446; Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 122, 201; Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom, op. cit., p. 250; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 116, 129, 147-150; Mircea Eliade, Myths and Reality, trans. Willard R. Trask (Harper Torch; New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 140.

⁴Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 38.

⁵Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 1, 71; Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 3; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 33; Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 12.

indicated above, man felt himself somehow caught up with the universe itself in a larger frame of reference in which he was at the same time profoundly enriched and to which he was in some mysterious way attuned in the depths of his being.¹

Kinds of Symbols

It goes without saying that man was not continuously the recipient of such deep experiences with the same degree of intensity. Yet, for example, each time he beheld the midnight sky the sky symbol performed a function which could be termed recollective. Hence we must speak of kinds of symbols.

A distinction must be made, in what Eliade terms symbol in the strict sense, between a symbol which reveals transcendence, and a symbol which extends the hierophany. The first might be termed "revelatory" symbol and used to designate those symbols which themselves constitute revelations of the sacred; the second, "recollective", to designate those symbols which recall to consciousness an experience of the sacred and in this fashion extend the hierophany further.

Revelatory symbol is used to designate an experience which communicates to the whole consciousness of man the presence and value of transcendence. These symbols would

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 202.

not be "creations of the psyche" and hereby is clarified a point which causes considerable ambiguity in Eliade. On the one hand symbol refers to the communication of transcendence, i.e. an experience in which man is recipient, and on the other hand symbol is described as "creation of the psyche".¹ Revelatory symbol is not the creation of the human psyche. It is the way in which transcendence is first perceived by man. It is only the secondary symbol which is creation of the human psyche, a creation whereby man, perceiving in symbol the communication of transcendence, responds analogously by creating as symbol certain elements related to the revelatory symbol.² These elements or secondary symbols extend this hierophany by recollecting it to man's consciousness for purposes of response, rededication, celebration and articulation. It must be noted that while this distinction is not present in Eliade, it is essential if one is to properly understand his conception of the world view of primitive man.

Among these recollective symbols, there are various types. First to be mentioned are those symbols which at one time served man as revelatory, and which subsequently served man as recollective symbols, e.g. the sky at night, moon, water. They will function as recollective after

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 177; Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 174.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 174.

they have served in a revelatory capacity.¹

A second type which must be mentioned is myth as symbolic locution, or a story which serves a symbolic function.² As a creation of the human psyche, it must be termed a recollective symbol. Eliade quotes Malinowski's description of its place in the life of primitive man.

Studied alive, myth . . . is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfills in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation of an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom . . . These stories . . . are to the natives a statement of a primeval, greater, and more relevant reality, by which the present life, fates and activities of mankind are determined, the knowledge of which supplies man with the motive for ritual and moral actions as well as with indications as to how to perform them.³

Important here is the fact that myth (like rite, image and recollective symbol) is a creation of the human psyche.⁴ It is an element in the domain of response,

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit.,
p. 10, 11.

²Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 16-17;
Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 418.

³Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 20.

⁴Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 174;
Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 425-426.

rededication and articulation. Consequently, primitive man, recipient of the experiential communication of transcendence in terms of revelatory symbol, assumed the task of responding in analogous ways to transcendence through the creation of secondary symbols.¹ Also important is the fact that in response to transcendence, primitive man assumed the task of making these secondary symbolic elements meaningful.² A decision is here implied, a decision to give transcendence top priority in his value scale and to interpret life in terms of transcendence. In a word, the meaningfulness of recollective symbol lay not simply in the symbol itself but in the meaning that the religious man brought to it by reason of his convictions and decision. In his religious response then, primitive man differed little from his contemporary counterpart.

What has been said of myth by way of illustration applies to secondary symbol. Generally among the other forms which must be mentioned is rite.³ Rite does through symbolic drama, what myth does through locution.⁴ Homo religiosus of primitive societies assumed the task of making these two elements myth and rite, serve to bring him

¹Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 12.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 158.

³Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 18-36.

⁴The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 105-106;
Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 18-36.

back to illud tempus, the time of greatest authenticity, the time when the gods first communicated themselves to man. In performing the rite, in narrating the myth, man of traditional society saw himself projected into these sacred times and saw his existence in the everyday world thereby consecrated, made authentic, real and full of meaning.¹

Image is another type of secondary or recollective symbol. Eliade describes image as a concentrated myth.² What the myth does by narration, the rite by dramatization, the image does by presence. It must be mentioned in passing that Eliade often uses image and symbol interchangeably without clearly distinguishing between the two.

Among the types of recollective symbol must be mentioned those which indicate the world in its totality. In primitive society, the surrounding world is viewed as a microcosm, the limits of which are chaos, unknown, awesome. Every microcosm has a center. In the center the sacred manifests itself in its totality, either in elementary hierophanies or in direct epiphanies of the gods. There may be several centers to each microcosm but each is considered in this mystic geography as the center of the

¹Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 20; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 28, 142; cf.

²Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 413.

world. This center is the intersection point of the three levels, world, heaven and hell. Instances of this appear the world over, e.g. for the Jews, the rock of Jerusalem over which the temple is said to have stood,¹ for the Christians, Golgatha.² Cities, temples, palaces, whatever form it takes the imagery or symbolism is the same--that of the cosmic mountain, the world tree, the central pillar supporting the universe.

From this point and at this point the creation of the world took place--the creation of man.³ The most widely distributed variant of this symbolism is that of the cosmic tree which is found in Vedic India, ancient China, germanic mythology as well as primitive religions.⁴ It is the point of communication and of passage from this world. The shaman's drum is made from the cosmic tree. Symbolism of ascension is connected. The cosmic axis is the center post of the cabin,⁵ and when the dwelling place changed in style, the hole in the roof became a symbol.⁶ Ritual climbing of the ladder was found in Thrace,⁷ and

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 41.

²Ibid., p. 42.

³Ibid., p. 43.

⁴Ibid., p. 44.

⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁶Ibid., p. 48.

⁷Ibid., p. 48.

and the Initiation of Mithra contained the stairway symbolism.¹ The Book of the Dead of Egypt reflects the ascension symbolism as do Ural Altic beliefs. Eliade maintains that so frequent is climbing and stairs in psychoanalytic literature that it might be termed part of the archaic content of the human psyche and not an innovation dating from a certain historical moment.² The significance of these forms is that of transcendence of the human condition and breaking of the ontological plane.

Construction of the sacred center is the equivalent of the creation of the world and is accomplished by rites.³ A whole host of myths, rites and symbols indicate the difficulty of achieving the center of the world and an equally great number of them witness to the easy access of the same. These reflect the ever present desire of men to live close to the source of sacredness, reality and meaning. Nostalgia for paradise is seen in this desire to live at the center of the world.⁴

Other symbols indicate to man the rhythms and patterns which show him the underlying unity of creation and give him an insight into himself. One such is the moon,

¹Ibid., p. 49.

²Ibid., p. 50.

³Ibid., Chapter 2.

⁴Ibid., p. 54.

as a secondary symbol which for primitive man was described by Eliade:

By its mode of being the moon 'binds' together a whole mass of realities and destinies. The rhythms of the moon weave together harmonies, symmetries, analogies and participations which make up an endless 'fabric', a 'net' of invisible threads which 'binds' together at once, mankind, rain, vegetation, fertility, health, animals, death, regeneration, after-life and more.¹

Again of the moon, Eliade writes:

It might be said that the moon shows man his true human condition; that in a sense man looks at himself, and finds himself anew in the life of the moon. That is why the symbolism and mythology of the moon have an element of pathos and at the same time of consolation, for the moon governs both death and fertility, both drama and initiation. . . .² Such is the law of the whole sublunary universe.

The symbolism of binding is revealing also, as Eliade states:

This multivalency of the binding complex--which we have not observed on the planes of cosmology, magic, religion, initiation, metaphysics and soteriology--is probably due to man's recognizing in this complex a sort of archetype of his own situation in the world.³

A further item which must be mentioned in listing the kinds of symbol is that kind of hierophany which becomes symbol.⁴ At this point it might be well to clarify some ideas of Eliade on hierophany. Hierophanies on the one hand seems to be restricted to the most profound manifestation of the sacred in terms of which we have described

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 180.

²Ibid., p. 184.

³Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 117.

⁴Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 446.

revelatory symbol. Yet on the other hand, Eliade mentions the fact that hierophany can become a symbol. The matter may be clarified by calling attention to the fact that Eliade's description of hierophany is itself symbolic. The communication of transcendence in hierophany meets all the requirements for symbolic communication. It is an instantaneous communication to the whole man which is productive of insight and value perception on many levels simultaneously. Every revelatory symbol is hierophanic, not every hierophany is a revelatory symbol or functions in that capacity at all times. Consequently, one could explain the above problem by stating that hierophany in Eliade is ordinarily though not exclusively used to designate the radical communication of the sacred. It may serve as a secondary symbol. The term itself refers to the fact of communication of the holy. Symbol (revelatory) refers to the manner in which the communication takes place.

Eliade, to touch on a final point, distinguishes symbol from hierophany by indicating that whereas hierophany is a transient if deep and penetrating communication of transcendence, symbol is a permanent or abiding consecration to transcendence. This can be understood if Eliade is speaking of recollective symbol which as such and by its continuing presence (if it were image or symbol as opposed to myth and rite) could be termed an ongoing reminder of the sacred dimension of existence. It would not be true

of revelatory symbol which itself would be transient in its communication of the sacred.

When Eliade describes symbol as prime container of primitive thought,¹ he seems to mean that upon perceiving the experience of transcendence and the Transcendent 'symbolically', primitive man articulated his insights in similar symbolic fashion: hence the image, secondary symbol, rite and myth.² His manner of articulation was analogous to his manner of perception, and at the same time served to bring him once more into contact with that profound dimension of existence. This, he notes, is a wholly different type of cognition and articulation. "Word is lacking"--reality is not. In 'words' proper to each, myth, rite, image and secondary symbol articulated a pre-metaphysics, and certainly a Weltanschauung.³

Primitive man received his most profound perceptions of reality in symbol:

It is really important therefore, this realization that though the symbolism and religious values of the sky are not deduced logically from a calm and objective observation of the heavens, neither are they exclusively the product of mythical activity and non-rational religious experience. Let me

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 9, 71; Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 3; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 33.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 174.

³Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 3; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 10, 15; Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 139.

repeat: even before any religious values have been set upon the sky, it reveals its transcendence. The sky symbolizes transcendence, power, changelessness simply by being there.¹

Again, the reference to the moon was not through "analytic exercises", but by intuition. "The analogies formed by the primitive mind are, as it were, orchestrated there by means of symbols."²

One could say with Eliade that symbol communicates by presence to a person rather than simply through verbal articulation.³ Primitive man articulates his insights in what we term symbols.

To uncover the insights of primitive man's understanding, one must look to myth and symbol and there discover the insights and values and the mindset which he brought to bear on his understanding of reality. In the words of Eliade:

We do not arrive at the mental universe of archaic man by logical investigation by means of man's explicit beliefs; it is preserved to us in myths, symbols and customs which still, in spite of every sort of corruption, show clearly what they meant when they began. In a way they are a kind of 'living fossils': and sometimes a single fossil is enough for us to reassemble a whole organism.⁴

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 39.

²Ibid., p. 157.

³Ibid., p. 269.

⁴Ibid., p. 10.

Such locutions are entirely different kinds of perceptions. Eliade affirms repeatedly that symbol communicates itself to the whole man.¹ It communicates not simply knowledge but a sense of value. It is a participative kind of knowledge,² an experiential knowledge, an intuitional type of knowledge which communicates itself on many levels and does so instantaneously. It should be noticed that as outlined in the kinds of symbol, it may take the form of verbal locution, but then it entails a use of words which could be termed symbolic: the words signify or are given the power of signifying a communication which is confrontational. When a believer recites a myth, he is brought into the presence of the events which are narrated and shares in their unfolding.³ He is drawn out of his own time and place into the time and place where the sacred events happen and this "being in the presence" of the sacred events while they are being performed is what is sanctifying, authenticating,⁴ therapeutic.⁵

¹The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 129; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 38, 39.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 204.

³Ibid., p. 206-207; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 150; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 23.

⁴Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 23; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 69; Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 6.

⁵Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 62.

In the image, the object itself, somehow is conceived of in terms of placing one in the presence of and under the influence of the cosmic powers represented therein.¹ This form of locution or communication is, needless to say, different from that of verbal or ideological communication on a conceptual level.²

Recollective symbol would also for Eliade effect the presence of the being signified and his ability to act.³ The transcendent is present existentially to primitive man when he is the recipient of revelational symbolic communication.⁴

For primitive man, all reality could take on a symbolic function. Eliade speaks of the world itself as betraying a transparency and the primitives as seeing the signature of the gods written large in their handiwork, the universe.⁵ As a result of their experience of transcendence, the primitives read many 'homologies' or

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 156; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 20, 83.

²Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 15-17.

³Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit.,
p. 269.

⁴Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 206, 207; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 25;
Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 56.

⁵The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 119.

similarities between the world, life, situation and behavior of man and that of the universe.¹

The moon, as revelatory symbol, conveyed to primitive man the similarity between lunar generation, death and rebirth, and the life pattern of man.

The moon is a body which waxes, wanes and disappears, a body whose existence is subject to the universal law of becoming, of birth and death. The moon, like man, has a career involving tragedy, for its failing, like man's ends in death. For three nights the starry sky is without a moon. But this death is followed by rebirth--the new moon. The moon's going out is never final. . . . This perpetual return to the beginnings, and this ever recurring cycle make the moon the heavenly body--above all others concerned with the rhythms of life. It is not surprising then, that it governs all those spheres of nature that fall under the law of recurring cycles; waters, plant, life, fertility.²

Patterns of life then, are symbolically communicated,³ as well as insights into the nature of man. According to Eliade, it is the lunar hierophany which enables man to effect a synthesis of various aspects of reality.⁴

This practice of effecting a 'symbolic' synthesis of reality and organizing a set coherent affirmation about

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 201, 209; Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom, op. cit., p. 252.

²Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 154; cf. also, Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 72.

³Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 157.

⁴Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 86-89.

reality and man, Eliade terms the logic of symbols, metaphysics and pragmatic ontology.¹

Symbolic communications or elementary hierophanies are gathered into groupings, and these groupings are then assimilated into symbolic systems which are nothing more than an overall approach to life.² Since these secondary symbols are eloquent, consequent upon an individual's having through free decision, adopted the religious world view as central to his way of interpreting life, he would through secondary symbolic affirmations and dedication gradually begin to effect a synthesis of the meaning of life, the place he has in the world.³

Symbol conveys the experience of the sacred, which, according to Eliade is the source for all of man's ideas of reality and truth.⁴ Symbol is that unique form of communication which enables the transcendent to communicate itself to man without incurring a loss of the sense of its mysteriousness.⁵ It expresses the sacred-as-life-experience.⁶

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 10-15.

²Ibid., p. 33; Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 3.

³Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 14, 76, 90, 92, 114; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 34, 63-64, 187; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 55.

⁴Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 139; Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 3.

⁵Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 206-207.

⁶Ibid., p. 202-209.

From this experiential perception of reality and truth, man was able later to bring forth his philosophic syntheses of reality.¹

Eliade notes that symbol also embodies in some sense that which it signifies.² This would be true especially of symbol in the revelatory sense but also true of symbol in the sense of recollective. The effect of revelatory symbol is to presence the transcendent to the whole of man. The effect of man's response, recollective symbol, is that man thereby conceives of himself as present to and contemporaneous to the events narrated by myth or dramatized by rite, presented by symbol and by image.³

For Eliade, symbol rises from the depths of man.⁴ In the first place through symbolic communication, man perceives himself to somehow be involved in a valuational sense with the patterns communicated through symbol--he sees himself susceptible to the same influence--deeply involved with the realities which are communicated in the ambivalence of the sacred, the sense of tremendum and fascinosam.⁵ Secondly, he notes that the language of

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 10-15.

²Ibid., p. 269.

³Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 122, footnote 1.

⁴Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 3.

⁵Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 20, 25; Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 141; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 116-130; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 55.

the unconscious is that of symbol.¹ Thirdly, he recognizes in himself the capacity of both symbol making and being perceptive to the communication by symbol.²

Eliade concludes, that symbolic thinking is consubstantial with the human condition, is the substance of the spiritual life of man. He notes that symbol may be disfigured, mutilated and disguised. Men may have a positive influence on it--but it is never to be phased out of the human condition.³

Symbol in the History of Man

A phenomenon which must be mentioned in this description of symbol in the thinking of Mircea Eliade is that of the fate of symbol in history. This term covers a series of several phenomena which transpire in the course of history. Some symbols during the course of time acquire new meanings, a kind of explicitation of the further implications of symbol which become attached to them. More precisely, this could be termed an event which takes place in the realm of secondary symbol, in which through reflection, there is a synthesizing process that takes place whereby

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 21; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 454; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 37.

²Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 177.

³Ibid., p. 11-13, 18-21, 148; Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op.cit., p. 148.

more and more meanings are assimilated to the archetypal phenomena.¹

Eliade also speaks of the maturation of symbols.² In the context of the above process whereby a symbol acquires new meanings in the course of time, Eliade maintains that to understand symbol fully, one must examine it in the fullness of its development and thereby understand it. He notes further that all of the new meanings acquired by symbol in the course of its development are actually implicit in the old and flow logically therefrom.³

Another phenomenon which could be mentioned in connection with what one might call the history of symbol is that of changes in the degree of meaningfulness which is attached to symbolic communication.⁴ Thus for example, the Greeks entered upon a period of demythologization which reduced all mythic and symbolic thinking to the level of reasoning.⁵ There is the phenomenon that Greek myths

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 16, 24-25, 159; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 26, 444; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 135; Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 191.

²Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 11-12; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 459, 465.

³The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 137; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 121.

⁴Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. IX.

⁵Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 148-159.

come down to us completely devoid of any ritual background.¹ Among the positivistic school with its high premium and exclusive attachment of meaningfulness to that which can be reduced to rational categories, symbol and myth will be negatively evaluated. Schools which are devoted to the evolutionary model for the interpretation of the history and life of man will also tend to relegate to insignificance the enunciatory power of symbol. Scientific historicism will adopt a similar attitude towards symbol.²

Infantilization is another aspect of what might be termed the history of symbol.² This is a tendency whereby all things are given a symbolic interpretation to the point of ridiculousness. There have been some tendencies towards this type of element in Christianity itself, e.g. the over literalistic attempt to read crucifixional symbolism into the various parts of the Latin Mass.

Demythologization is a phenomenon which is also present in the history of religious. In addition to the instances above there is a tendency among some schools of anthropology and sociology to look down upon affirmations on reality of primitive man simply because they are voiced

¹Ibid., p. 158.

²Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. IX; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 128.

³Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 208-211; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 444.

in symbol and myth.¹

All of these elements are misinterpretations or over-concretization of symbol in various periods. As Eliade indicates, it is the symbol, the "whole of its meanings" that has significance. To restrict it to one dimension is to destroy it as an instrument of cognition and to distort the meaning intended. Eliade also terms this "degradation of symbols".²

It is Eliade's position that with the advent of Christianity in the incarnation the symbolic heritage of all the ancient world has been revalorized. Christ, by becoming man, valorized the whole history of human dimension and all of its symbolism. There is nothing in the symbols of the world which is not susceptible to interpretation in the Christian light.³

Function of Symbol

Eliade sees the chief function of symbol as revelatory. Preliminary to discussion of the function of symbol, he observes that the world "speaks" in symbols, "reveals" itself through them.⁴ He then discusses the

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 156.

²Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 141.

³Ibid., p. 159-161; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 136; Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 137.

⁴Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 201.

depths of the communication it is symbol's function to reveal.¹

The first function is symbol's capacity of revealing a modality of the real or a situation of the world not evident on the plane of immediate experience.

Symbolic thinking is not the exclusive privilege of the child, of the poet or of the unbalanced mind: it is consubstantial with human existence; it comes before language and discursive reason. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality--the deepest aspects--which defy any other means of knowledge.²

An instance of symbol's revealing a modality of the world not otherwise perceptible is that of the moon, which by its waxing and waning, growth and demise, reveals a cyclic life pattern of the universe of which man himself is a part. As a result, the world serves as a cypher for religious man, wherein he can read the mystery of life, creation, youth, immortality.³ The mode by which this perception takes place is that of perception by active consciousness prior to reflection.

The man of the societies in which myth is a living thing lives in a world that though "in cypher . . ." is open. The world "speaks" to man and to understand its language he needs only to know the myths and decipher the symbols. Through the myths and symbols of the moon, man grasps the mysterious solidarity among temporality, birth, death, and resurrection, sexuality, fertility, rain, vegetation

¹Ibid., p. 201 ff.

²Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 12.

³The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 150.

and so on. The world is no longer an opaque mass of objects arbitrarily thrown together; it is a living cosmos articulated and meaningful. In the last analysis, the world reveals itself as language. It speaks to man through its own mode of being, through its structure and its rhythms.¹

A second function of symbol is to reveal the sacred, the real. For primitives, symbol always is religious. It presents a primitive ontology, i.e. a coherent set of beliefs which reflect an approach towards life, a world view. In archaic cultures, the real (the powerful, the significant, the living), is the equivalent of the sacred. The world is the creation of the Gods who wrote their signature in the universe itself. Consequently, the discovery of a world pattern is a discovery of the sacred. Hence it is that archaic man discovers the real in his quest for the sacred.²

Sacredness and reality are one for primitive man and in revealing the sacred, symbol reveals the real.

Thirdly, symbol has the function of expressing simultaneously, several meanings the unity of which is not evident on the plane of immediate consciousness or even of critical reflection.³ Eliade states:

If the mind makes use of images to grasp the ultimate reality of things, it is just because reality manifests itself in contradictory ways and therefore cannot be expressed in concepts.

¹Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 141.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 203.

³Ibid.; cf. also Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 450.

. . . It is the image that is true, not any one of its meanings nor one alone of its many frames of reference. To translate an image into a concrete terminology by restricting it to any one of its frames of reference is to do worse than mutilate it--it is to annihilate, to annul it as an instrument of cognition.¹

Commenting further, Eliade notes: "Whatever its context, symbol always reveals the basic oneness of several zones of the real."² One could revert to his comments on lunar symbolism in order to find further substantiation of this position which is maintained. After commenting on the lunar symbol as revelatory of the union between lunar, rhythms, becoming, waters, growth of plants, woman, death and resurrection, human destiny, weaving, Eliade concludes:³

In the final analysis, moon reveals a correspondence between various levels of cosmic reality and certain modalities of human existence . . . this correspondence is not indicated by immediate and spontaneous experience nor by critical reflection. It is the result of a certain mode of viewing the world.⁴

A fourth function which is mentioned by Eliade is that of revealing a perspective in which several divergent

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 15.

²Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 452 ff.

³Ibid., p. 180; Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 141.

⁴Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 203; cf. also Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 141; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 116, 130; Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom, op. cit., p. 250; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 452-453.

realities fit together.¹ This is a direct result of symbol's ability to reveal the structural unity of several aspects of reality. Because lunar symbol is applicable on several levels of existence, one may through it discover a modality of existence which is universally applicable. In other words, Eliade is stating that the symbolism of the moon is revelatory of a fundamental pattern of existence and man can, from within the religious perspective, conclude that life itself carries in its very structure the triple facets of generation, death and resurrection.²

Such an insight makes possible a perspective in which things can be viewed as united. Eliade calls attention to the fact that not only is there question of intuition of a certain mode of being but also of comprehension of that mode of being in the constitution of the world and of the human condition. In other words, not only is man made aware of such a perspective, but he perceives himself deeply involved with it and attuned to it, he perceives that mode of being to be descriptive of the world, his existence, and his very being.³

This perspective makes it possible for man to be open up to the degree that cosmos and myth are existential

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 455.

²Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 226-227.

³Ibid., p. 20.

experiences. He knows them as his own because he is part of them. He reads the modalities of his own existence in the cosmos with which he perceives himself to be in harmony. He becomes homo symbolicus.¹ So much is he a part of them and they of him that one can perceive symbol's eloquence on all levels of experience, both conscious and unconscious.² This is a further indication of the interpenetrability of life's varied forms. Consequently, the stimulation of one area, would influence the same activity on every level.³ For example, before the spring planting in several primitive societies, ritualistic orgies would take place in the fields. The underlying belief was that the stimulation of sexual fertility on the part of man would influence favorably the fertility and the productivity of the fields.

A fifth function of symbol is advanced by Eliade:

Perhaps the most important function of religious symbolism--especially important because of the role it will play in later philosophical speculations--is its capacity for expressing paradoxical situations or certain patterns of ultimate reality, that can be expressed in no other way.⁴

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 199.

²Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit.,
p. 38-39.

³Ibid., p. 33-35, 354-355.

⁴Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 205.

This aspect of symbol is indeed an important one. Symbol's uniqueness as a means of communication might be said to stem herefrom. In some sense, symbol enables man to communicate mystery intact, to enunciate it as mystery without vitiating the mysterious dimension thereof. It serves to call the reality to mind (waters as source of all life) and render it present to consciousness in the context of all the other symbolic meanings of water, while preserving something of the integrity of the mystery. Waters immediately beckon to consciousness the mysterious source of life as incomprehensible but somehow present.¹

Symbol then would be singularly apt as a means of communication for transcendence and transcendent beings. They thereby reveal their presence without exhausting their intimate nature. Eliade speaks of the myths and symbols implying the coincidentia oppositorum, or the fact that a reunion of opposites is possible. The androgyne, to take but one such symbol, as a being encompassing the characteristics of both male and female in one person, is an example of this coincidentia oppositorum. What Eliade says about symbols of this type generally would fit the meaning of the androgyne:²

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 188.

²Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 174-175.

First of all, man's deep dissatisfaction with his actual situation, with what is called the human condition. Man feels himself torn and separate. He often finds it difficult properly to explain to himself the nature of this separation, for sometimes he feels himself to be cut off from 'something' powerful, 'something' utterly other than himself, and at other times from an indefinable, timeless 'state' of which he has no precise memory, but which he does, however, remember in the depths of his being: a primordial state which he enjoyed before Time, before History. . . . From a certain point of view one may say that many beliefs implying the coincidental oppositorum reveal a nostalgia for a lost paradise, a nostalgia for a paradoxical state in which the contraries exist side by side without conflict and the multiplications form aspects of a mysterious Unity.¹

Ultimately, Eliade notes, the wish to discover once again the unity now lost is that which has caused man to conceive of opposites as complementary aspects of a single reality. Its origin, existential experiences caused by the need to transcend the opposites, and this same drive gave birth to the first theological and philosophical speculations.² Commenting further on this aspect of primitive man and his world picture, Eliade notes that the element common to myths, rites, and symbols of this nature is that all seek to transcend a particular situation to abolish a given system of conditions and achieve a mode of total being.³

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 122.

²Ibid., p. 123; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 166.

³Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 123, note 1.

Commenting on the importance of this notion, he observes:

One of the greatest discoveries of the human spirit was naively anticipated on the day, when, by certain religious symbols, man guessed that oppositions and antagonisms can be fitted and integrated into a unity. From then onwards negative and sinister aspects of the cosmos and the gods not only found a justification but revealed themselves as an integral part of all reality or sacrality.¹

The sixth and final function of symbol as described in Eliade concerns the existential value of religious symbolism which for him is one of the key elements which distinguish symbol from concept. The conceptual communication conveys clarity, precision, designation, and articulation of the matter.² The symbolic communication expresses the spiritual as life experience; and preserves contact 'with the deep sources of life'.³ One might say that where concept communicates God as Sein symbol communicates him as Dasein. Concept describes "God"--symbol, "my God".

Eliade explicates the notion further by stating that religious symbol "not only reveals a pattern of reality or a dimension of existence; it brings at the same time a meaning to human existence".⁴ It does this by highlighting the unity between human existence and the

¹Ibid., p. 206.

²Ibid., p. 206-207.

³Ibid., p. 206-207.

⁴Ibid., p. 207.

patterns of the cosmos. The world becomes "familiar", reality reveals a deeper dimension. It is seen as a larger picture in which man is deeply involved, and in allowing man to "escape from a subjective situation by seeing his experience in a broader perspective and one which has overall meaning". It might even serve in a soteriological function.¹

We conclude this section with a note which Eliade italicizes throughout:

It follows that the man who understands a symbol not only "opens himself to the objective world, but at the same time succeeds in emerging from his personal situation and reaching a comprehension of the universal."²

Role of Symbol in the Thought of Mircea Eliade

In the thinking of Mircea Eliade, symbol is primarily revelatory.³ It is the means whereby man first experienced transcendence. Eliade speaks of hierophany as a manifestation of the sacred.⁴ He speaks of symbol as sometimes taking the place of hierophany--becoming itself a hierophany, an autonomous revelation. Hierophany then is symbolic, in the revelatory sense of the term, which is the most profound sense in which Eliade describes

¹Ibid., p. 207.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 201.

⁴The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 11.

symbol. The communication is to the whole man, all at once; it is an experience of deep authenticity and it bespeaks both insight and value. Inasmuch as his notion of symbol marks the way in which primitive man perceives transcendence, we conclude that symbol is of central importance to his thinking. An understanding of his thought procedure will bear this factor out.

Primitive man first experienced the sacred through symbolic communication, or what we have termed 'revelatory' symbol. It was an experience which drew him out of himself, revealed to him a dimension of existence of greater richness and profundity than that of everyday existence.¹ At one and the same time man perceived the existence of another dimension, and its immense value for him.² Through it, he felt at the same time in the core of his being, a sense of the numinous, a sense of dependency, of being one with the universe. Yet through the transparency, he saw universe itself and himself, man, as creations of transcendent being or beings, who were responsible for his existence and who gave him models for his own existence in the "world-universe-self" that was his experience.³ He

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit.,
p. 38-39.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 206-207, 202.

³Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 18, 176;
Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 122.

became attuned to symbolic communication and perceived analogies between several dimensions of reality and himself.¹ To this experience he was drawn. The communication was such that he was given the option of interpreting his entire life in the light of this experience. Religious man was the one who accepted the option of interpreting his whole existence in the light of the experience of transcendence.² Having done so primitive man articulated, reaffirmed, and retained contact with the sacred through myth, rite, image and secondary symbol, elements analogous to the perception whereby he first became aware of the existence of the sacred. Thereafter, it would seem, within that perspective and within the context of the decision made, it was his task to interpret myth, rite, image and secondary symbol as meaningful ways of recapturing the sacred moment for consecratory, therapeutic, or recreational purposes, and thereby give meaning to his life in their light.³ Inasmuch as man's initial perception of the sacred was through symbol and man's articulation of the sacred was likewise in symbol,⁴ it must be said that according to Eliade, both revelation to primitive man and

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit.,
p. 206-207.

²The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 11-12.

³Ibid., p. 12-20.

⁴Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 177.

response were symbolic. Symbol in the revelatory sense and in its analogous sense are pivotal insights for the understanding of man and his role in the world.

However, Eliade goes further. Looking into symbol and contemporary man, he finds vestiges of symbolic behavior in psychoanalysis,¹ in the Judaeo Christian tradition as well as in modern day society.² A word must be said about this dimension of his thought, since it is his contention that attunement to symbolic communication is part of human consciousness rather than a stage in its development.³

From the time of Aristotle, the Greek ideal of man as rational animal was biased against symbol.⁴ This was reflected in the 19th century assumption by scholars, that authenticity in human existence is based on historical consciousness. Modern man is determined to regard himself as a purely historical being, living in a radically desacralized universe.⁵ In so doing modern man has selected a

¹Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 97.

²Cosmos and History, op. cit., III; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 16-18, 160-161, 168-169; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 137; Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 123, 129; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 33-36.

³"Mircea Eliade Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," op. cit., p. 143.

⁴Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 10, 11, 125.

⁵Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., IX.

tragic stance toward existence and one which Eliade terms "not without its greatness".¹ Eliade observes that in modern society, it is not technical discoveries in themselves which are obstacles to the religious worldview: it is the magico-religious acceptance of them which altered the perspective and content of religious life of primitive society.²

Symbol at present is beginning to assume once more its role as a respected instrument of cognition. Non Western cultures are beginning to make their influence felt on the historical scene. More interest is felt in them, and great strides have been made in such studies, e.g. orientalia. The findings of such areas of studies as depth psychology verify some of the crucial points in the religious understanding. Again, there has been evidenced a reaction against rationalism, positivism, and scientism. Interestingly, prior to the 19th century, symbol in the West was the most part respected as an instrument of cognition.³

Eliade sees indications of the presence of symbol in human affairs today substantiated in the findings of the

¹The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 203.

²Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 128.

³Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 9; Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 10-11.

behavioral sciences, and in many facets of the contemporary world. He notes that no man is purely rational-- within the subconscious, vestiges of religious and symbolic behavior motivate the thinking and action of man.¹ One of the reasons for this is that religious experience is one which engages the whole of man stirring him in the depths of his being. It is an experience of existence in its totality which reveals to a man his own mode of being in the world.² The very substance of the spiritual life, symbol, myth and image can be disguised, mutilated and degraded by never extirpated,³ for symbolic thinking is consubstantial with the human condition.

Speaking of the nonhistorical part of man, Eliade notes that it preserves the memory of deeper, more beatific and complete existence. Entry to this dimension of man is through image and symbol. Thereby, man recovers the language and at times the experience of a lost paradise. This is not a less than human dimension; rather it is more enriching than the conscious area of man's existence.⁴

¹The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 205-211.

²Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 17.

³Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 11, 19; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 13.

Symbol then speaks to man today. The need is to listen.¹
 In point of fact, the initiatory experience is an existential experience basic to the human condition.²

The spontaneous rediscovery of archetypes in modern man is a common phenomenon.³ Jung notes that the cause of therapeutic psychoanalysis' effectiveness revolves around the atemporal character of the unconscious.⁴ There is, he notes, a religious aura to the unconscious. Religious experience is at the same time the total crisis of existence and exemplary solution of that crisis. The solution operates by making existence open to values no longer contingent or particular, thus enabling man to transcend personal situations and gain transcendence of spirit.⁵

Psychologists have indicated the importance of the imagination to human existence. For some the problems of the modern world stem from disequilibrium of the psyche due to the progressive sterilization of the imagination.⁶

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 25, 33-36.

²Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 131.

³Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 33-36.

⁴Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 119-120.

⁵The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 216.

⁶Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 18-20.

To have imagination is to see a world in its totality.¹ Without images, man is cut off from deeper realities of life and the soul.² Jung further notes that for modern man, myths are no longer centrally important. The crisis of the modern world arises from its break with Christianity. Its problem is the quest of a new myth.³ Elsewhere, he notes that the crisis is due to the externalization of Christian myths.⁴ Individualization, Jung notes, the ultimate goal of human life, is a process which is achieved through initiatory ordeals.⁵ The sacred, in being supremely other (transcendent) and at the same time exemplary, forces man to view himself as both real and universal.⁶ The supernatural forgotten on a conscious level survives in the unconscious in symbol, and in the ecstatic experience of privileged individuals.⁷ This symbolic, religious aspect of man also lives on in man's nostalgias and day dreams.⁸

¹Ibid.

²Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 103.

³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 29.

⁵Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 135.

⁶Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 18.

⁷Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 97.

⁸Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 433.

The unification of mankind will be possible if appreciation of the importance of symbol be realized. In fact, if unity can be had at all, it will be based on symbolic understanding.¹ Hence, one must, Eliade feels, take these nostalgias seriously.

Jung also notes that the core of any genuine human life includes at times experience of life as failure. This feeling is described as the obscure perception of missed vocation, of the feeling one has betrayed himself. It is a crisis which only the hope of beginning over can make tolerable.² In other words, symbol's effectiveness in the contemporary world can be much greater than it is. The religious solution lays the foundation for an exemplary behavior and in consequence compels man to reveal himself as both the real and the universal.³

By way of conclusion, one might note with Eliade that the formulation in modern terms of an archaic myth betrays at least the desire to find a meaning and transhistorical justification for historical events.⁴ Lastly, Eliade sees the study of man as symbolic to be the gateway to a richer form of existence for man. Man would come to

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 18-20.

²Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 135.

³Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 150.

appreciate his own attunement to rhythms, and the symbolism of his body. A propensity for this exists in modern man--it only awaits activation.¹ Symbol was also operative in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The spread of Christianity was facilitated immensely through mankind's heritage of religious symbolism.² Christianity, a local sect, says Eliade, was made a universal religion by religious symbols. The two universalist spiritual movements of the day were the mystery religions and philosophy.³ Through these, Christianity was enriched in three ways: first, the symbolism of homo religiosus were seen as validated by the Incarnation; second, the imagery and initiatory patterns of the mysteries enriched Christian ritual; third, the assimilation of Greek philosophy made for the possibility of more precise articulation and reflection upon the mysteries of Christ.⁴

The Judeo-Christian innovation, according to Eliade, first constituted the apex of the history of religion, because the "illud tempus" (Sacred times) now moved from time of origins into historical time; second, God entered history personally; third, history itself became theophany.⁵

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 33-36.

²Ibid., p. 175.

³Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 119.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 169.

Christianity's most striking innovation, he notes, was the transfiguration of historical event into hierophany.¹ Christianity entails simultaneously existence in history and contemporaneity with Christ.² Neither in Judaism nor in Christianity does faith produce a basic modification of traditional concepts.³ The peasant masses found consolation and support for their Christian religious belief in archetype and repetition.⁴ Both Yahweh and Christ demand imitation. Interestingly, Eliade goes so far as to say that the pagan rites which continuously subverted the Jewish nation brought authentic religious experiences.⁵

One might give a rapid overview of some of the vestiges of such behavior governed by mythic themes that are evidenced in the non-historical portion of contemporary man's existence.

First, there might be mentioned the 'nostalgias' which frequently are present in man. For example, a song serves to call to mind a "time gone by", a land "long ago or far away", a precious period of time in one's life which is now gone.⁶ Individual man transforms his own past into

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 172; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 153.

³Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 111.

⁴Ibid., p. 147.

⁵Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 142.

⁶Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 101; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 17.

an archetype, childhood into "illud tempus".¹ Eliade notes that if man analyzes the images suddenly released by any sort of music, sometimes by the most sentimental song, and would find that these images express the nostalgia for a mythical past transformed into an archetype. This past signifies not only regrets for a vanished time, but countless other meanings as well. It expresses all that might have been but was not; in short, the longing for something altogether different from the present instant; something in fact inaccessible or irretrievably lost--"paradise itself".²

Poetic creation and reading itself supplant the role played by myth in traditional societies.³ Among other modern mythic vestiges are plays, books, movies, reading, black magic, astrology, pseudo occultistic neospiritualistic movements, political movements, social movements, nudism, complete sexual freedom movements. Literary thematic vestiges include adventure heroes, Don Juan, military hero, hapless lover, cynic, nihilist, melancholic poet.⁴ Among the other literary themes are: difficulty and trial, isles of paradise, themes of primordial waters, quest of the holy grail, initiatory themes, hero and villain, persecution of beautiful young women, salvation by love, the unknown protector,

¹The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 208-209, 211.

²Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 16.

³Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 36.

⁴Ibid., p. 33.

detective story, lyric poetry.¹ In society itself, there are elements like festivals, public ceremonies, spectacles, sports, youth organizations, pictures and slogans. Thus the imagination and dreams of modern men are replete with religious symbols, figures and themes. Individual maturation experiences are initiatory in nature. In fact, Eliade maintains that initiation is co-existent with any and every human existence.² Yet, oftentimes initiation today is restricted to reading a book.³ Other survivals lie in folk customs, games, guild system in middle ages, secrets of profession, corporation, trade and societies. Deprived of religious expression, the initiatory motifs deliver their message on different planes of human experience.⁴ Still other remnants are in the ceremonies surrounding birth, puberty, marriage and death. Several mythic patterns surround the advent of a new year and any form of beginning. The novelty of the modern world consists in its revelation of ancient sacred values at the secular level.

Eliade's position is that while symbol may not be accorded primary importance, yet there are manifold evidences of its presence in contemporary society, psychoanalysis and Judaeo-Christianity. For him, one of the greatest discoveries

¹Ibid., p. 35.

²Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 137-138.

³Ibid., p. 133 ff.

⁴Ibid., p. 22.

of the 20th Century may be that of symbol. Man remains homo religiosus. Through symbol, he is attuned to the experience of transcendence though his contemporary interpretation of that experience may be quite different.

Conclusions

1. Revelatory symbol for Mircea Eliade is the way the gods reveal their presence to men of primitive societies.

2. A mysterious type of revelation, it is experiential, addressed to the whole man.

3. Through this revelation in symbol, and man's response to it which is also in symbol, Mircea Eliade is able to describe for modern man the mindset of primitive man.

4. In the process of so doing, the universality of response to revelation through symbol, prompts for him the questions: Is perceptiveness to symbolic communication a part of the human condition itself? And secondly, "Is man innately religious?"

5. Eliade notes that according to modern day psychology, man is responsive on both the conscious and the subconscious level to symbol. Moreover, the Judaeo-Christian heritage of western man betrays a great sensitivity to symbolic communication. Thirdly, modern secular man, for all his attempts at demythologizing, evidences in his individual and societal behavior responsiveness to symbolic patterns.

6. Eliade concludes that for man, primitive and modern, symbolic communication of transcendence is common. Man may interpret this communication in either a religious or a secular perspective. He may by conscious choice make it the basis for his appreciation of and his interpretation of life.

7. Since symbol provides an explanation in a revelational perspective for the mindset of primitive man to modern man, symbol plays an important role in the entire thought of Mircea Eliade.

8. Secondly, Eliade is able in the process of so doing, to shed light on the nature of man.

9. Thirdly, the religious dedication of man in any age can be seen to be an interpretation of life based on a conscious decision of man, which in turn rests on the experience of transcendence which is communicated to him through symbol.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF SYMBOL IN THE THOUGHT OF H. RICHARD NIEBUHR

The Approach of H. Richard Niebuhr

Hans Frei situates the source of Niebuhr's theology in post-reformational Calvinism and in the academic tradition of nineteenth century Protestant Theology. From Calvinism, Niebuhr gained an appreciation of community and of its need "to find and to be the obedient community of the sovereign God".¹ Nineteenth century German academic influence is reflected in Niebuhr's debt to Kant, to romantic and metaphysical idealism. It is also found in his concern for history and the meaning which it has for theology. Lastly, it can be detected in his interest in the experiential aspect of the God-man relationship, a trend which stems from Schliermacher.²

¹Hans Frei, "Niebuhr's Theological Background," Paul Ramsey, et al., ed., Faith and Ethics: The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 10.

²Ibid.

In an article for Christian Century two years before his death, Niebuhr surveyed his thought and concluded that his theological convictions and concerns over the previous thirty years were continuous and consistent.¹ He admitted to a double shift in theological attitude, indicating that he had moved from liberalism to a 'crisis' theology in the early thirties, and later on effected another move to a position somewhat closer to his previous one. The decisive period was the decade of the thirties. It was then that his basic convictions were formulated. Of these the most fundamental was that of the sovereignty of God.² Other major convictions included the recognition of human sinfulness, trust in the "ground of being" as a miraculous gift, and, lastly, the radically historical character of human existence.

Two men had a profound influence on the thought of H. Richard Niebuhr.

Students of theology will recognize that Ernst Troeltsch and Karl Barth have also been my teachers, though only through their writings. These two leaders in twentieth century religious thought are frequently set in diametrical opposition to each other; I have tried to combine their main interests, for it appears to me that the critical thought of the former and the constructive work of the latter belong together.³

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, "Reformation--Continuing Imperative," Christian Century, March 2, 1960, p. 248.

²Ibid., p. 249.

³H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: MacMillan, 1941), p. IX.

From Barth, Niebuhr received his deep concern and reverence for the transcendence of God who is the Absolute which brooks no like, and also his conception of radical monotheistic faith which is for him the only fitting response to that absolute.¹

To Troeltsch, Niebuhr is indebted for his respect for the role of history in theology, individuality of man and movements in Christian history. Frei outlines the three basic components of Troeltsch's historical method in the form of principles: principle of criticism: man's knowledge is historically and culturally relative. Principle of Analogy: interpretation of past events is in some way analogous to the present. Principle of Correlation: an attempt to detect the common denominator and mutual interaction of all phenomena of the spiritual-historical order.²

In critiquing the theology of the day, Niebuhr felt that in reaction to liberal formulation, theology was moving once more towards seeing Christianity as right believing. To him, ideas were being given primacy over personal reaction. His comment on these phenomenon sheds light on his own theological approach:

¹Faith and Ethics, op. cit., p. 39-40 ff.

²Ibid., p. 55.

When I think about this, I have to say to myself that important as theological formulations are for me, they are not the basis of faith, but only one of its expressions, and that not the primary one. I discover further a greater kinship with all theologians of Christian experience than with the theologians of Christian doctrine: . . . Existentialism has also served to reinforce my concern for the personal, for the religiously experienced, for I-Thou relations between God and man and between men.¹

In the light of this, Frei can comment that Niebuhr's interest in personal communication is reflected in his existentialism.²

Niebuhr further feels that one must bear in mind that human religion as part of human culture is, like it, subject to a constant process of reformation and deformation, fall and metanoia. The evolutionary process as regards human religions is not simply a story of unlimited upward progress.³

Consequent upon his appreciation of the sovereignty of God, Niebuhr cautions theologians about confusing Christology with theology and church with kingdom of God.⁴ To a tendency to do this, he attributes several false emphases in the church's history. Another development from this strain in his thinking is his concern, primary concern in

¹"Reformation--Continuing Imperative," op. cit., p. 249.

²Hans Frei, op. cit., p. 15.

³Ibid., p. 77.

⁴Ibid., p. 78.

fact, for the reformation of the Church. This he sees as an on-going movement--metanoia as a continuous demand.¹

One might conclude that Niebuhr's approach to theology will be cast in a revelational frame: the sovereign God, only Absolute, revealing himself to man, a wondrous gift to man caught in a sinful condition. A deep appreciation for history will have Niebuhr very conscious of the historically and culturally conditioned character of man's existence. Niebuhr's theology will betray a stress on the need for repentance, and it will concern itself with themes like experience, person, process.

It will be the intention of this portion of the study to establish the fact that Niebuhr's theology will show a central appreciation for symbol in both understanding and the articulation of the God-man relationship. Having laid the groundwork, one can proceed to an examination of symbol in the thought of H. Richard Niebuhr.

Symbol in H. Richard Niebuhr

To obtain an understanding of Niebuhr's notion of symbol, three principal sources must be examined: first, two essays contained in the Responsible Self,² secondly,

¹Ibid., p. 79.

²H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self: An Essay on Christian Moral Philosophy (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

Niebuhr's thinking on revelation as contained in The Meaning of Revelation;¹ and thirdly, his understanding of radical monotheism, contained chiefly in Radical Monotheism and Western Culture.²

Responsible Self

In "Metaphors and Morals", Niebuhr begins by noting the phenomenon whereby man expresses deep-rooted fears, desires, and conflicts in pictures and in drama on the unconscious level.³ He notes that this "mechanism" at the same time disguises and reveals what is deepest in man. Psychological schools have addressed themselves to the explanation of the phenomenon in the attempt to render them understandable. Another approach to the problem has been made by Ernst Cassirer, one which Niebuhr feels is more "significant for the moralist".⁴

Proceeding, Niebuhr notes that man is a symbolic animal in the sense that in order to perceive, organize and understand reality, he creates symbols to facilitate comprehension.

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: MacMillan, 1941).

²H. Richard Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture (New York: Harper, 1960).

³Responsible Self, op. cit., p. 151.

⁴Ibid.

. . . we are far more image-making and image-using creatures than we usually think ourselves to be and, further, that our processes of perception and conception, of organizing and understanding the signs that come to us in our dialogue with the circumambient world, are guided and formed by images in our minds.¹

Among such symbols, Niebuhr includes language itself and the "great symbols" which man uses to understand how he is to manage his life. In language, names are allocated to parts of man's experience. Verbs, tenses, cases, grammar, syntax, are all symbolic elements, by means of which man attempts to organize or catalogue existence and experience to make comprehension more readily possible.²

Another facet of man's symbolic propensity is found in any means he uses to communicate. Art, be it painting, sculpture, literature, poetry, or drama, entails expression through symbol of the experience of man. Symbol is used further in both philosophy and science in language and research models. In the history of religions, he notes, symbol is indispensable to experience, and interpret the "holy", and to interpret life itself.³ In point of fact, Niebuhr states, if man as user of language, artist and worshipper is symbolic, it is not surprising that in his

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 152.

³Ibid.

activities as moral agent, i.e. in decision making and in administering his affairs, he makes use of symbol.¹

Thus it may be concluded that Niebuhr here is understanding by symbol a means of facilitating understanding made use of by man in his approach to reality. Turning to the symbol of Christ, Niebuhr notes:

. . . when we reflect on our existence as Christians . . . we become aware that in the christian life, Jesus Christ is a symbolic form with the aid of which men tell each other what life and death, God and man are like; but even more, he is a form which they employ as an a priori, an image, a scheme or pattern in the mind which gives form and meaning to their experience.²

The figure of Jesus Christ has entered deeply into the moral language of Christians so that it can be said that by means of it the Christian "consciously or unconsciously apprehends, interprets and evaluates his fellow man".³ Through this same symbol, the Christian understands God, the goal of human activity and the meaning of life itself. With this symbolic model, he understands himself and forms himself in his actions and sufferings.⁴

Historically the Christian has made use of other "root-metaphors" to understand his existence.⁵ Among these

¹Ibid., p. 152, 3.

²Ibid., p. 154.

³Ibid., p. 155.

⁴Ibid., p. 156.

⁵Ibid., p. 159.

are man the maker and man the political being. Several other symbols of lesser scope have also been used.

Niebuhr understands the Christian style of life through an application of his understanding of man the symbol-maker to the Gospel, and seeing Christ as the central model.¹ He terms Christ the paradigm of responsibility, making reference here to the third "root metaphor" which he advances: Homo dialogicus, or responsible man. In this sense Christ is the symbol in that he "interprets all actions upon him as signs of the divine action of creation, government, and salvation and so responds to them as to respond to divine action." Commenting further he notes that:

The Christian ethos so uniquely exemplified in Christ himself is an ethics of universal responsibility. It interprets every particular event as included in universal action.²

From the Responsible Self, Niebuhr understands symbol as a necessary part of man's perceiving, organizing and understanding of reality. Symbol is a cognitional model and man is homo symbolicus. The Christian is no less homo symbolicus. Christ is symbol, model whereby man understands self, others, God, life and death. Christ is the paradigm, or perhaps one might say, "incarnation" of responsible selfhood for the Christian.

¹Ibid., p. 161.

²Ibid., p. 167.

Meaning of Revelation

The second source to cull the notion of Niebuhr on symbol is that of revelation. One must first set forth the notion of revelation and then unearth the 'understanding of symbol contained therein'. Speaking of revelation, Niebuhr notes:

By revelation in our history then we mean that special occasion which provides us with an image by means of which all the occasions of personal and common life become intelligible. . . . Whatever else revelation means, it does mean an event in our history which brings rationality and wholeness into the confused joys and sorrows of personal existence, and allows us to discern order in the brawl of communal histories. . . . In this sense we may say that the revelatory moment is revelatory because it is rational, because it makes the understanding of order and meaning in personal history possible.¹

Revelation then is an event the occurrence of which provides one with an image for comprehension of the whole of life. It is a moment in man's "inner history", that is the personal experience of an individual or community, by means of which past, present and future coalesce into an existentially meaningful "now".² Here there is question of an experiential communication, in the realm of value, and rooted in person.

Continuing, Niebuhr describes the revelatory moment as one in which "something has happened which compels our faith and requires us to seek rationality and unity in the

¹Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 80.

²Ibid., p. 50, 1.

whole of our history.¹ Because revelation takes place in inner history which is the realm of value and person, the question posed is not: "What central truth is learned?" but "What persons do we meet in the revelatory event?"² Knowledge of persons differs from knowledge of objects since in knowing objects only the knower is active whereas in knowledge of selves both the knower and the known are involved in dialogue. Consequently, in the latter type of knowledge we cannot know save as we are known and knowledge of otherselves must be both received and responded to.³ Niebuhr poses the question: Who is the person we know or encounter in the revelatory moment? The answer for Richard Niebuhr is: The person of God. W. Herrmann is quoted:

All revelation is the self-revelation of God. We can call any sort of communication revelation only when we have found God in it. But we find and have God only when he so incontestably touches and seizes us that we wholly yield ourselves to him . . . God reveals himself in that he forces us to trust him wholly.⁴

For Niebuhr, then, the revelatory moment is one in which the presence of God is made known to man in the core of his subjectivity in a self-validating, experiential event which gives to man comprehension of the need to

¹Ibid., p. 122.

²Ibid., p. 105.

³Ibid., p. 105-107.

⁴Ibid., p. 111.

interpret the whole of his life in the light of this event. Revelation, he is saying, is the self-disclosure of the infinite person. It is realized in us only through the faith which is a personal act of commitment, confidence and trust.¹

Describing revelation further, God is designated as the one who discloses himself in our history as our knower, author, judge, and only savior.² Revelation is the "peculiar activity of God, his unveiling of his hiddenness, his giving of self in communion".³ Revelation is the moment in our history through which we know ourselves to be "apprehended by the knower".⁴ In revelation, we are valued and all our "values are transvaluated by a universal valuer".⁵ It is the moment in which the "fate in our common history that lowers over us as persons in community, reveals himself to us as person in community with us".⁶ Revelation is the moment in which we are "given a new faith to cleave to and to betray, a new standard to follow and deny".⁷ As he puts it succinctly:

¹Ibid., p. 112.

²Ibid., p. 111.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 112.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

When we speak of revelation we mean that something has happened to us in our history which conditions all our thinking and that through this happening we are enabled to apprehend what we are, what we are suffering and doing, and what our potentialities are. What is otherwise arbitrary and dumb fact becomes related, intelligible and eloquent fact through the revelatory event.¹

In the light of this understanding it is not difficult to see why Niebuhr states that revelation is that moment to which we constantly return as to our first certainty,² and continued reinterpretation is an ongoing need.³

The function of this analysis of Revelation was the determination of the understanding of symbol by H. Richard Niebuhr. Thus far Niebuhr had indicated symbol to be the means whereby man may organize, perceive and understand reality. He indicated it to be a cognitional model whereby man the symbol maker comprehends reality, self, others. For the Christian the Christ symbol was indicated to be the means for comprehension of self, others, God, life and death. One must, however, draw attention to another understanding of symbol to which Niebuhr refers:

The history of religions again brings into view the manifoldness and diversity, but also the indispensability of symbolism in all man's experience, apprehension, and interpretation of the holy or the supernatural . . .

H. Richard Niebuhr has chosen to elaborate upon the "active" facet of man's symbolic propensity. Yet man the symbol

¹Ibid., p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 102.

³Ibid., p. 86, 7.

maker, creates symbols precisely because he is most readily attuned to the comprehension of reality through symbol. Consequently, man's receptivity to symbolic communication is also a factor in his communications with God. Man not only addresses himself to God and life and others in symbol. Through symbol, God and others address man. Niebuhr adverts to this symbolic receptivity in man's religious dimension in the aforementioned citation in which the indispensibility of symbol in the "experience" of the holy is indicated. The author of this study submits that when Niebuhr speaks of revelation in terms of self disclosure of the sovereign God, in a moment which brings rationality and wholeness to personal existence, a moment in which God so "incontestably touches and seizes us that we wholly yield ourselves to him", that we are "forced" to trust him wholly, a moment in which all our thinking is conditioned and all becomes comprehensible, then Niebuhr is speaking of a self-communication of God to man in symbol. And although he does not use the term ex professo, Niebuhr is utilizing the notion of real symbol in the Rahnerian sense of the term: the self-disclosure of God in otherness whereby he becomes present to us. He is also using "revelatory symbol" in the Eliaden sense of the term, the symbol which itself becomes hierophany, which itself is the manifestation of the sacred, the self-communication of God to man in the depths of man's subjectivity. One may conclude then, that Niebuhr is

implicitly using the notion of real symbol (revelatory symbol) in describing revelation as he does, and, as shall be noted later, a more consistent usage of symbol would have resolved some of his Christological difficulties.

Radical Monotheism

The third source for unearthing a total comprehension of H. Richard Niebuhr's understanding of symbol is his thinking on radical monotheism. The basis for this doctrine is his deep appreciation of the sovereignty of God. (Cf. *How my Thinking has Changed*.) The sovereignty of God extends itself to all men. Consequently, H. Richard Niebuhr must theologize on how God addresses himself to men outside the Christian framework. The result is his thinking on radical monotheism which he then relates to the Christian dedication.

Radical monotheistic faith strictly is a human faith. By faith in this context, Niebuhr means "dependence on a value center and loyalty to a cause". "God" in this frame of reference is that "value center" or "cause". And since every man, to live, must have such value centers or causes, there are no "atheists".¹

Niebuhr distinguishes radical monotheistic faith from other human faiths. "Henotheism" is that form of

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Civilization (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1960), p. 101.

human faith in which the center of value is placed in some closed society, e.g. the clan. The meaning of individual and common life, the cause for which one lives is derived from that society.¹ In "polytheism", there are several centers of value, and hence loyalties to several causes. In some senses, this form of human faith could be termed directionless.² The third form of human faith and that with which he is concerned is radical monotheistic faith. Here the value center and cause is no one reality among the many but in fact the "One beyond the many, whence all the many derive their being and participation in which they exist."³ Describing this faith, Niebuhr states:

Radical monotheism . . . is a form of human faith, that is, of the confidence and fidelity without which men do not live. It may, but need not, be expressed in verbalized beliefs. When the confidence is so put into words, the resultant assertion is not that there is a God but that Being is God, or, better, that the principle of being, the source of all things, and the power by which they exist is good, as good for them and as good to them. It is relied upon to give and conserve worth to all that issues from it. . . . As loyalty such radical decision for and commitment to the one beyond all the many as head and center of the realm of being.⁴

Radical monotheistic faith response is called for by revelation itself.⁵ It consists in decision for and

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²Ibid., p. 28.

³Ibid., p. 32.

⁴Ibid., p. 38.

⁵Ibid., p. 38.

commitment to the one beyond the many as the head and center of being. Revelation in this perspective is "that which specifies the events in which radical monotheistic faith is elicited."¹ As Niebuhr puts it elsewhere, it is a confidence in the fact that the principle of being and the principle of worth are one, confidence that being can be depended upon to give and maintain value.²

Niebuhr notes that as faith reliance, radical monotheism entails absolute dependence on the principle of being for establishing the worthwhile character of self.³ As faith loyalty the principle and the realm of being are taken as the cause for the sake of which the self lives. It is a loyalty to all existents as bound together by a loyalty that "is not only resident in them but transcends them".⁴ This faith and faith loyalty for Niebuhr give form to all moral laws:

Such loyalty gives form to morality since all moral laws and ends receive their form though not their immediate content from the form of faith reliance and faith loyalty.⁵

Niebuhr notes that in revelation there is not so much question of disclosure of objective being, as the demonstration to selves of faithful and truthful being:

¹Ibid., p. 42.

²Ibid., p. 43.

³Ibid., p. 32.

⁴Ibid., p. 33.

⁵Ibid., p. 34.

What we try to point to with the aid of conceptual terms is the principle of being or as the one beyond the many, is acknowledged by selves as 'thou'. The integrity that is before them here is the oneness of a self; it is the faithfulness that keeps promises, is indefectibly loyal, is truthful in freedom. . .¹

Thus for Niebuhr through revelation Being itself is shown to be faithful being, personal being, and the human response to such revelation is the development of integrated selfhood.² Developing the notion of integrated self-hood, Niebuhr speaks of the "incarnation" of radical monotheism. Radical faith becomes incarnate insofar as every reaction to every event is a response in loyalty and confidence to the one who is present in all such events.³ Consequently, radical faith is either there in all roles and relationships of man or it is not there at all.⁴

At this point it must be noted that Niebuhr's understanding of radical monotheistic faith response is a symbolic one. He speaks of the incarnation of radical monotheism elsewhere as the "concrete expression in a total human life of radical trust in the one and of universal loyalty to the realm of being". Such a designation covers the "self-expression of a being whereby it comes to a possession of self in knowledge and love", which is Rahner's understanding of real symbol.

¹Ibid., p. 46-47.

²Ibid., p. 47.

³Ibid., p. 48.

⁴Ibid., p. 58.

Lastly, one must ask how Christianity is related to radical monotheistic faith response. Here Niebuhr turns to Christ and addresses him as the incarnation of radical monotheistic faith:

Jesus Christ represents the incarnation of radical faith to an even greater extent than Israel. The greatness of his confidence in the Lord of heaven and earth as fatherly in goodness toward all creatures, the consistency of his loyalty to the realm of being seem unqualified by his trust or by competing loyalty. . . . The word of God as God's oath of fidelity became flesh in him in this sense, that he was a man who single-handedly accepted the assurance that the Lord of Heaven and earth was wholly faithful to him and to all creatures and who in response gave wholehearted loyalty to the realm of being.¹

Radical monotheistic faith for Niebuhr is a kind of faith on the human level to which the Christian is related by reason of the fact that Christ incarnates it and is a paradigm or model of it.

One may conclude the discussion of Niebuhr's understanding of symbol from the perspective of his teaching on radical monotheistic faith by saying that taken in itself, radical faith is a symbolic notion in the real sense of the term since it governs the total self-expression of man. Insofar as it is related to the Christian, inasmuch as Christ is the incarnation of radical faith, Christ serves as a cognitional symbol which helps man the Christian understand how he is to relate himself to the sovereign God. The loyalty called for is very definitive:

¹Ibid., p. 42.

Radical monotheism dethrones all absolutes short of the principle of being itself. At the same time it reverences every relative existent. It has two great mottoes: "I am the Lord thy God --thou shalt have no other Gods before me", and "Whatever is, is good."¹

Resume

At this point Niebuhr's understanding of symbol may be tabulated. Symbol is first understood to be a necessary part of man's perceiving, organizing and understanding of reality. It is a cognitional model and so much a part of man that Niebuhr can term man "homo symbolicus". Man is symbol-maker.

Secondly, although he does not explicitly use the term symbol in reference to the phenomenon, in discussing the self-communication of God to man and in discussing man's response to God in radical faith, either religious or secular, Niebuhr is discussing the real symbol in the Rahnerian sense of the term.

Thirdly, in describing the "revelatory moment" and the manner of communication of God to man in his inner history, Niebuhr speaks of symbol in the self-validating, experiential sense of the term. Here symbol approximates the notion of Eliade whose "revelatory symbol", i.e. one which itself constitutes hierophany, would seem to fit the bill.

¹Ibid., p. 37.

Lastly, the ethics of H. Richard Niebuhr, insofar as they consist in the application of the symbol making and using capacity of man may be termed the spelling out of the symbolic response to the sovereign God as well as the means of organizing approaches to reality and its understanding through the use of the Christ symbol and a host of other symbols in addition to the root metaphors of Craftsman, Citizen, and Responsible man.

Function of Symbol in H. Richard Niebuhr

Having determined Niebuhr's understanding of symbol one can turn to the functions he sees them fulfilling. Symbol for H. Richard Niebuhr is the means whereby man grasps reality, organizes it, and articulates it. When man encounters the world about him he begins sorting it out and assigning words to designate portions of it. Through these words, symbols, he can then relate facets of reality to one another and thereby organize his thoughts. In this way, he can more readily comprehend them and use them in the direction of his life.

What is the general idea in such interpretation of ourselves as "symbolic" more than as "rational" animals? It is, I believe, this that we are far more image-making and image-using creatures than we usually think ourselves to be and, further, that our processes of perception and conception, of organizing and understanding the signs that come to us in our dialogue with the circumambient world, are guided and formed by images in our minds.¹

¹The Responsible Self, op. cit., p. 151-152.

A second function of symbol is consequent upon the first. Through symbol man perceives his own place in existence and can obtain insight into who he is.¹ The root metaphors, "man the crafts man",² man the citizen,³ enable him to understand how he may interpret his life. Using the symbol of the craftsman, man recognizes himself as a being whose responsibility it is to fashion his existence. He is to approach life actively and to assume direction of it.⁴ In similar fashion the symbol of man the citizen, enables man to understand his social responsibilities and sheds light on his approach to life in a communal perspective. Through it, man perceives his duties, rights and responsibilities towards his fellows and understands himself as "man in relationship". Niebuhr's own suggested third root symbol, "responsible man", provides even more fertile a field for the understanding of the mystery that is man.⁵

In the third place, symbol functions as a communicational element which enunciates meaning on several different levels simultaneously. The symbols of craftsman,

¹Ibid., p. 48.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 51.

⁴Ibid., p. 49.

⁵Ibid., p. 56.

citizen, responsible person, have ramifications in individual, social, political areas.¹

Fourthly, symbol sheds light on the whole of reality by illuminating a portion of it.² For example, as a craftsman, man would take up a piece of wood to work upon. The finished product in all its stages of production would be dependent upon his skill and perseverance. This insight as to a small portion of reality, e.g. making of a table, provides the key to man's approach to the whole of life. In such an approach, ultimate responsibility for the management of man's existence is seen as dependent upon his selection, "skill" and perseverance.

A fifth function that symbol performs in Niebuhr's thought is that of enabling man the individual and also man in community to assimilate and unify, past and future into an integrated organic whole.

For history may function as myth or as symbol when men use it (or are forced by processes in their history itself to employ it) for understanding their present and their future. When we grasp our present, not so much a product of our past, but more as essentially revealed in that past, then³ the historical account is necessarily symbolic.

Man's past as living on in internal history is part of his existential present. The future also dwells there in potentia. Insofar as symbol provides the pattern for unifying

¹Ibid., p. 53.

²Ibid., p. 52.

³Ibid., p. 156.

the whole of reality for an individual, it enables him to assimilate all of life into a whole.

A sixth function is that of research model for sciences, metaphysics and theology, as well as ethics.¹

Mention must be made of the function of symbol in the history of religions. Niebuhr notes that symbol serves as a means of experiencing, understanding, interpreting the holy, and of apprehending and understanding of God, man, and self.² A deeper probe of Niebuhr's thought indicates that in delving into the revelational aspect of symbol, Niebuhr is actually referring to symbol in the real sense as Rahner describes it.

In this sense, symbol is the means whereby a symbol in expressing itself constitutes itself in being. It is further, in this sense, the way in which God presences himself to man and the way in which man responds to God.

Role of Symbol in the Thought of H. Richard Niebuhr

H. Richard Niebuhr accepts the cultural and historical relativity which is the discovery of contemporary man and attempts to spell out his theology from within this framework.³ He accepts the fact that human intelligence is conditioned by sensation, so that though man can have

¹Ibid., p. 148.

²Ibid., p. 153.

³The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 10 ff.

thoughts about universal ideas, those thoughts are limited, not universal.¹ He accepts the conclusions of history and sociology which indicate that man is a being whose intelligence is limited sociologically and culturally. Time and place condition the perspective of man so that statements thought universally applicable are now seen to be relative. He further has accepted the historicity of the subject, noting that in many senses "time is in man" as well as man in time.² As to theology, he concludes:

Christian theology must begin today with revelation because it knows that men cannot think about God save as historic, communal beings and save as believers. It must ask what revelation means for Christians rather than what it ought to mean for all men, everywhere and at all times. And it can pursue its inquiry only by recalling the story of Christian life and by analyzing what Christians see from their limited point of view in history and faith.³

Revelation is the starting point for Christian theology. To this theology one must turn to discover the role symbol plays within it.

Appreciation of history is one of the keynotes of Niebuhr's theology. Adverting to the fact that the Church's early preaching was a simple recital of the events connected with Jesus' life and a confession of what happened in the community,⁴ Niebuhr remarks that this is not cause for

¹Ibid., p. 7.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 30, 1.

⁴Ibid., p. 32.

wonder since man is "in history as a fish in water". A revelation from God would in some way have to be in history. Here a problem arises for Niebuhr. He notes that symbols such as nature and scripture do in fact point to God if viewed from Christian history, but outside that faith context, they may not do so. As he puts it:

Nature regarded through our history is indeed a symbol of what we mean, a pointer to God; but nature interpreted through our history and faith, or torn out of this context and placed in another, does not indicate what we mean.¹

To resolve this difficulty, Niebuhr makes a distinction between "history as lived" and "history as seen"; between events "in our history" and "events in impersonal time". "Our history" he terms "participative"; it is personal. It might be termed subjective history, the history of the subject,² as opposed to external history.³ Its concern is with value rather than with fact. In it, past, present and future are in the present as an on-going constituent factor of the individual or community. It is a "heritage past" as opposed to an "over and forgotten" past. Time, in "our history" then, is organic, social, a dimension of our life and our community's being.

When the evangelists of the New Testament and their successors pointed to history as the

¹Ibid., p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 47.

³Cf. ibid., pp. 44-54.

starting point of their faith and of their understanding of the world, it was internal history that they indicated. They did not speak of events as impersonally apprehended but rather of what had happened to them in their community.¹

It is because such history can only be 'confessed' by the community that it is both esoteric and limited. To comprehend it would entail looking at the matter from within the perspective, the viewpoint of that community, participation in their history. Hence, H. Richard Niebuhr concludes that in addition to being revelational as to its starting point, theology must be confessional. And since revelation is its starting point, and revelation must be in history, that revelation must take place within the "inner history" of every man.

Since the basic conviction of all Niebuhr's thinking is the sovereignty of God, he is posed with the problem of how to explain the revelation of the sovereign God to man in the depths of man's subjectivity. The self-communication of God to man, is explained in symbol in the real sense of the term. Though Niebuhr does not use the term explicitly, his description of it as an experiential perception of the presence of God in non-verbal fashion enables us to understand this communication in the light of Rahner's understanding of the real symbol as "the supreme primal way in which one reality renders another present," namely through its self-expression in otherness.

¹Ibid., p. 53.

It might also be understood in terms of Eliade's "revelatory" symbol, i.e. a symbol which itself constitutes a revelation.

Here a problem must be mentioned which is ambiguously delineated in Niebuhr's thought, the resolution of which would be facilitated by a more consistent usage of the notion of the real symbol. On the one hand, he views revelation as the self-disclosure of a person, and that person is God himself.¹ On the other hand, this person of God is the one who is revealed, not the person of Christ.² This is a strange dichotomization, particularly in view of the fact that Niebuhr speaks of Christ in such a way that man learns about God only through this divine "Rosetta Stone".

The God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ is now trusted and known as the contemporary God, revealing himself in every event; but we do not understand how we could trace his working in these happenings if he did not make himself known to us through the memory of Jesus Christ; nor do we know how we should be able to interpret all the words we read as words of God save by the aid of this Rosetta stone.³

This position is strange too in the light of his statements about Christ as the symbolic form whereby men tell each other what life and death, God and man are.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 111, 112.

²Ibid., p. 107-110.

³Ibid., p. 113.

⁴The Responsible Self, op. cit., p. 154, 155.

Again in describing the use of the Christ-symbol in moral language, Niebuhr notes that men see their companions in need in the form of Christ.¹ They use the Christ symbol to understand God himself as indicated above, and their fellow men, their selves, and even the goal of all existence, the meaning of life and death. Each of these statements would seem to be awkward if the self-communication of God to man as person is not in the person of Christ.

To probe the matter further, one may turn to Niebuhr's thinking on radical monotheistic faith. This is described as a human faith,² and since in this perspective God means center of value, and faith means dependence upon and loyalty to such a center of value or cause, one concludes that all men have such centers of value (there are no atheists).³ Consequently all men are the recipients of revelation which in this perspective is "that which specifies the events in which radical monotheistic faith is elicited".⁴ To review once again the content of revelation one may cite Niebuhr; who notes that the beliefs need not be verbalized but if they were they would not entail acceptance of the existence of God but rather that the "principle

¹Ibid., p. 155.

²Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit., p. 24.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 42.

of being, the source of all things and the power by which they exist is good". As loyalty, such a faith is described as "decision for and commitment to the one beyond all the many as the head and center of the realm of being."¹ Or as he notes elsewhere, the principle of being is acknowledged by selves as "thou".² One may logically ask whether relating the person of Christ to revelation as self-communication of God as person by designating him as one of the greatest "incarnations of radical faith"³ does justice to either Christ himself in whom God reveals himself,⁴ or to Niebuhr's emphasis on Christ in his theological reflections.

It would seem that two interpretations are possible at this point. Either one must first perceive the self-communication of the sovereign God as person, and then be the recipient of a second similar symbolic communication of God's presence in Christ, or one must say that all men are the recipients of the self-communication of God as person. Looking about some note others through dialogue with whom they discover to be recipients of similar revelational experiences, and to have chosen to respond to those experiences in community, modeling their response on that of Christ. Yet the question remains, is Christ simply a

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²Ibid., p. 46.

³Ibid., p. 42.

⁴The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 113.

possible model for response? Or more basically, is the experience of revelation of God common to all men, and Christianity simply a matter of interpretation?

That one is confronted by such Christological problems in Niebuhr's revelational thought may be seen from the remark of Hans Frei:

So while the factual beginning of reflection about God and man again and again takes place in the context of natural cultural religion, yet in terms of interpreted history . . . the Christian begins with the knowledge of natural religion only as it is seen through faith in Jesus Christ.¹

This position is a difficult one to maintain. It would seem to entail extracting from the Christian a core human experience. Frei goes on to say:

One may say therefore that Niebuhr's theology and ethics are radically monotheistic. Indeed they are theocentric rather than Christocentric inasmuch as the problem of natural religion never disappears, for we always face God not by any means apart from Jesus Christ, but as the one who is also other than Jesus Christ.²

The author of this study submits that a more explicit usage of the concept of the real symbol would have extracted Niebuhr from his problems. To begin with, his overriding concern with the sovereignty of God³ may be advanced as cause for hesitancy in designating Christ as the person in whom God most fully revealed himself. The

¹Faith and Ethics, op. cit., p. 66.

²Ibid.

³"Reformation--Continuing Imperative," op. cit., p. 248.

concern is valid when one recalls Bultmann's challenge: "How did the preacher become the preached?" Yet the matter would be clarified by the understanding of Christ as the self-expression of the Father in otherness. Christ could be seen as the symbol of the Father, the Father's self-expression through logos in materiality, very God and presence of the one symbolized, yet other as well. In this event the theologizing would run as follows.

Revelation is the self-disclosure of the Sovereign God to man in the depths of his personal experience.¹ It is a valuational communication of that God as a person who cherishes man and offers himself to man in communion.² Man responds to this communication of the one beyond the many as person in radical faith commitment.³ The individual who has so committed himself, viewing the community of men known as Christian finds in it a community which has made the decision to interpret its experience of that God in terms of Christ's life since for them Christ is the person through whom God made his presence known. Christ then, as incarnate God, or God's way of incarnating himself to and for man, would for this reason set forth the paradigm for man's conduct in God's sight. The Christian would be the one who

¹The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 111.

²Ibid.

³Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit.,
p. 48.

recognized the person of Christ as the symbol of, and the presence of God among men. Therefore, the Christ symbol would be that community's way of understanding, organizing and celebrating its dedication to God. Others, viewing that Christian community, would interpret the matter otherwise.

This position would seem to be in line with a more consistent usage of the principles of Niebuhr relative to his understanding of radical monotheistic faith, revelation, and symbol generally. It would lend clarity to his enunciation of revelation, and would render secure his basic conviction as to the import of maintaining the absolute sovereignty of God.

This lengthy digression has been necessary to clarify the avowed difficulties in Niebuhr's position. Its clarification will provide the basis for the discernment of the role of symbol in Niebuhr's theology. To this task one must return.

It has been noted that revelation is the starting point for the theology of Niebuhr.¹ The sovereignty of God has been noted as a point of key importance to the theologian. The historical and cultural, to say nothing of human limitations of man have been noted. Niebuhr places the self-communication of God to man's subjectivity within the

¹The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 30, 1.

framework of symbol. God reveals himself to man through effecting his presence in the core of man's being through symbol.¹ He has further spelled out the response of man to God in the real symbol that is radical monotheistic faith.² He spells out the implications of that radical monotheistic faith in terms of the Christ symbol,³ and in terms of the root-metaphor of responsibility.⁴

One may conclude then, that the real symbol provides the synthetic cord by which the theology of H. Richard Niebuhr may be understood. It serves to explicate the starting point and revelational framework of his theology by being the way in which God communicates himself to man as person in man's subjectivity. It is the way in which man's response in radical faith is delineated. Inasmuch as the ethics of H. Richard Niebuhr consist in spelling out the implications of response in radical faith and in responsibility to that self-communication they too may be designated in terms of symbol as process of self-expression. Symbol used by Niebuhr, and used more consistently than by Niebuhr does indeed facilitate the organization, comprehension and articulation of reality. In organizing his theology around symbol, one submits, one only does what Niebuhr calls for: the use of symbol to grasp reality.

¹Cf. p. 144 of this chapter.

²Cf. p. 149 of this chapter.

³The Responsible Self, *op. cit.*, p.154 ff. Cf. also The Responsible Self, p. 167.

⁴Ibid., p. 48.

CHAPTER V

CORRELATION

Karl Rahner, Mircea Eliade, and H. Richard Niebuhr's thought may be correlated on several points. The root of this correlation will be revelation, which each sees as the self-communication of the transcendent God to man, and symbol which is the key to the articulation of his respective understanding of revelation. For each of these men, revelation is the starting point for his reflections, and this revelation is situated in the depths of the human experience of man. To the question: How can finite man be the recipient of a communication of the Transcendent God? each answers: through symbol.

Rahner pinpoints the locus of revelation in the attunement of the agent intellect (Vorgriff) to universal being.¹ Herein lies the supernatural existential, orienting man to ens supremum. This orientation is possessed as an existential; it is, in fact, present, but awareness thereof is not. The individual may or may not see it as a supernatural orientation. Nonetheless, for the believers, it is factual and here it is that God addressed himself to man in man's subjectivity.

¹Spirit in the World, op. cit., p. 181.

For Eliade, man is addressed by God who reveals himself in an affective and cognitive communication to the whole man.¹ What is communicated is the presence of the Transcendent in a pre-conceptual, non-verbal, and valuational fashion.

Niebuhr speaks of God's revelation to man in man's inner history, that is in the depths of the human experience of the individual. Here too, there is question of a core or experiential communication, as opposed to a "simply verbal" one.²

One concludes that symbol is the manner in which God, for each of the three men, makes his presence known to man. One concludes further that this communication is situated in the human experience of the individual. For each of these men, the communication is universal--³ the interpretation of the experience in religious terms, i.e. as the self-communication of a transcendent God to man, is contingent upon the decision of individual men.

Rahner, Eliade, and Niebuhr differ in their approach to the relationship of God to man. Rahner takes the

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 38; Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 9, 71.

²Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 50, 1.

³"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 228; The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 165-167; Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit., p. 24.

philosophic approach,¹ and his discussion of the God-man situation, and its articulation is philosophic. He uses the transcendental analytic method to examine the structures of man's consciousness, in order to come to an understanding of man himself. In formulating his understanding of symbol, he discusses simply the most fundamental way in which a being represents, coming up with the notion of the real symbol: that property of every being whereby it expresses itself in otherness to constitute itself in being and to come to a possession of itself in knowledge and love.² This concept runs like a thread through his thought and is the unifying factor in his anthropological theology.

Eliade, an historian of religion, uses methods which are at the same time empirical and more than empirical.³ His approach is fundamentally that of a hermeneut. He collects the facts and then attempts to secure understanding in categories used by primitive men in understanding and speaking about their experience. It is through this filter of the mindset of primitive man that modern man must assess archaic insights. Examining the mindset of primitive man,

¹Metz, "Forward" to Spirit in the World, op. cit., p. xvi.

²"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 229.

³"Mircea Eliade Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," op. cit., p. 145.

Eliade finds it is symbolic: man, the recipient of a "symbolic" communication from the transcendent god(s), affirms, articulates and celebrates his response in symbol: i.e. in the assumption of the responsibility of lending meaning and sacrality to his life by keeping attuned with the source of sacrality through myth, rite, image and symbol itself.

H. Richard Niebuhr begins his theological reflections with revelation conceived as a communication to man's inner history, (a phenomenon which he does not refer to as symbol nominatim) in non-verbal experiential fashion¹ which may be termed symbolic in the 'real' (Rahnerian), or "revelatory" (Eliaden) sense. A ground for a theological synthesis for H. Richard Niebuhr would be "real" symbol; proceeding from this starting point, he explicates response to revelation, using both 'real symbol' and symbol as cognitional model. Niebuhr's usage of symbol as cognitional model, with his emphasis on the symbol making capacity (essential) of man, makes him the one who can most clearly spell out specifics in terms of response to revelation.²

One may conclude that for all three men "real" symbol forms the synthesizing factor in their articulation. The reality is not so called by each, but the usage to which

¹Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 111.

²The Responsible Self, op. cit., p. 154.

symbol is put makes it readily identifiable as such. Rahner enunciates the philosophic understanding of this reality, Eliade perhaps the experiential aspect, and Niebuhr, like Eliade sets forth the experiential aspect of symbol. Niebuhr's forte in his theology is in the use of symbol as a cognitional model in spelling out the implications of the Christian life, e.g. in the use of the Christ-symbol and the symbol of the responsible man.

One may examine the understanding of symbol in each of the men's work. Rahner, as indicated, ex professo limits himself to the real symbol.¹ He understands it as the means whereby being comes to constitution of self, self-possession in knowledge and love. It is the representation whereby a being renders itself present to self and to the other. It is an ongoing process of multi-faceted self-expression in otherness.

For Eliade, symbol was primitive man's primary means of locution. He describes it as a special type of communication to the whole man whose uniqueness consists among other things in its capacity to bring about an instantaneous, multi-dimensional communication to man of insight, value and meaning.² Revelatory symbol is that symbol which itself constitutes a hierophany, a self-communication of God to man.

¹"The Theology of Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 225.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 201 ff.

This is comparable to Rahner's real symbol used in reference to God's gift of self to man. Eliade also deals with the response of man, a response analogous to the manner in which the perception of transcendence initially took place--i.e. in symbol also. Recollective symbol is the term which might be given to man's response to the revealing God, a response which is expressed in myth, rite, image, symbol. This kind of communication is further described as a type of participative knowledge or experience, and man is perceptive to it on both a conscious and a subconscious level.

As to Niebuhr's understanding of symbol, one may refer to the "real" symbol which is utilized to describe God's communication of self to man as person in the depths of man's inner history.¹ This is a self-validating, illuminative symbolic communication, one which sheds light on and gives meaning to the whole of man's life. He speaks of it as something which compels assent and is creative of the need for synthesis. He further speaks of symbol as a cognitive model, noting that with the use of symbols like that of man the craftsman, man the citizen, and man the responsible self, used in conjunction with the Christ symbol, the Christian may find the fashion in which he is to inject direction and meaning into life.²

¹Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit., p. 32-33.

²The Responsible Self, op. cit., p. 154, 459.

It is useful to examine what function symbol is to play in human affairs and in man's religious understanding, according to each of the men. Rahner sees symbol (self-expression in otherness) as the means whereby being constitutes itself in wholeness.¹ It is further the means whereby one comes to know the other, and one makes oneself known to the other. In theology, it is the means of understanding the theological treatises in themselves, and secondly, it is the means whereby the mutual interrelationships of the various treatises may be articulated, synthesized.²

For Eliade the essential function of symbol is revelatory.³ He describes its function by indicating what and how it reveals. Symbol reveals a modality of the real which is not immediately apparent to man from other perspectives. It is a revelation of the sacred, the really real. Through it, several meanings may be conveyed simultaneously, the unity of which is again not perceptible in other than a symbolic perspective. Symbol then is revelatory of a perspective in which divergent realities fit together. Symbol is further capable of revealing paradoxical situations or patterns of ultimate reality which again are perceptible in no other way. Lastly, symbol is capable of revealing the sacred as life experience.

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 234.

²Ibid., p. 245.

³Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 201 ff.

Niebuhr views the function of symbol as that of enabling men to perceive, grasp, organize and articulate reality.¹ Symbol, in illustrating the part, sheds light on the whole. It has the capacity of enabling man to unify and assimilate past, present and future. In the realm of the holy, symbol facilitates the articulation and communication of the sacred.² It is under this latter category that Niebuhr's description of the way revelation takes place may be placed (i.e. that which this study has called the "real symbol" in H. Richard Niebuhr). The function of the "real symbol" might be said to be that of communicating the presence of God to man.

The three men share an appreciation of symbol as the way in which God in non-verbal fashion, experientially communicates himself to man in the core of man's subjectivity. Eliade and Niebuhr appreciate the experiential character of symbol, and further the symbol-making ability of man. They recognize the essential character of man's symbol-making if man is to know reality and ascertain how to direct his life.

The role of symbol in the theological formulations of each man must now be examined. Through symbol, Rahner explicates man as Geist in Welt (spirit in the world). By

¹The Responsible Self, op. cit., p. 151.

²Ibid., p. 153.

reason of the openness of man's agent intellect to the ens commune, man is a being who has an orientation to God as part of his makeup (albeit gratuitous). Because of the symbolic character of all being, including Ens Supremum, Rahner is able to synthesize the whole of theology around the presence of God to man through symbol.¹ The Logos is the self-expression of the Father, the Spirit, self-possession in knowledge and love. Christ is the extension of the self-expression of the Father into the realm of time and space--his presence there. Church and individual Christians are extensions of that presence. Church is ~~further~~ a community of people who through taking resurrection seriously have the courage to live lives of such a nature that they will "leaven" the world to a realization of the orientation of all men to God an event which took place in creation. Revelation in Christ then is the explication of the communication of God to man in creation, its fullest expression. Christ showed what this situation of man with God is by his lived existence as sign, symbol. His followers continue this symbolic role by exemplifying it in their own day by their love of neighbor after the model of Christ. The Christ symbol is that of the personal presence of God among men. In response to the personal presence of the Father in Christ a community was formed to continue that presence. This community lives its identity in the

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 245.

passion-death-resurrection pattern of Christ, celebrates its identity in Eucharist, communes with Christ present in its midst in sacrament, and thereby assumes the call to sacramentality which is a life of witness. Roles in the community, priestly, religious, lay, are also expressed in terms of sign presence, or symbol. Among the aspects of the sign presence which Rahner describes are sign of hope, sign of presence of God among man, and sign of the fact that the center of man's existence and value has been shifted by Christ to a point beyond that of life. One concludes that for Rahner, the whole of theology is spelled out in terms of revelation and in revelation, symbol is the crux. His is a theology of symbol.

Eliade's theology of primitive man is cast in the frame of revelation. Through symbolic presence, the gods first communicated themselves to man. Man received a communication betokening mysterious presence; a self-validating experience, he perceived himself thereby to be summoned to acceptance of the experience as center of his interpretation of life, and to commitment to making it such. Homo religiosus is the man who responded positively to the invitation to interpret one's life along religious lines, and accepted the responsibility for consistently living life in accord with this vision. He authenticated his existence through the symbolic means of myth, rite, image and symbol, in

order to keep himself and his life attuned to the ground of existence and meaning, the transcendent one.¹

An ongoing reinterpretation of his subsequent life in the light of the revelatory moment and its inherent meaning, brought about for religious man further knowledge about man, the gods, man's unity with all creation and with the fundamental rhythms of the universe.

While uncovering the mindset of primitive man, other questions arose for Eliade, the chief of which was: Such is the data unearthed, that one must ask whether at least some of the aspects of the religious life of primitive man do not reflect what is in effect an essential part of human experience.² On the premise that symbol does constitute a part of all human experience or the human condition, why is symbol not operative today? Eliade concludes that symbolic perceptiveness is part of the human experience of man yesterday, today and forever, yet the interpretation placed upon it as well as the import accorded it in various ages, differs. Relegated to the peripheral areas of life today, in many instances, these experiences have "submerged" and are present and operative on the level of the unconscious, and in various of the creative arts. Here they remain, their power and eloquence latent, yet always capable of being

¹Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 174; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 425 ff.

²The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 205, 211.

revived. The renewal of symbolic appreciation and the renewal of western civilization are elements which will go hand in hand.

In Niebuhr's theology revelation as the self-communication of God to man is a central concept. The sovereign God communicates himself to man mysteriously in man's inner history. A valuational communication, a self-validating one, it incorporates a demand for commitment of the total self in response to God. Religious man, the one who accepts the invitation to believe, looks about and aligns himself to a community which he sees living out a response to revelation which he judges to be authentic. The Christian is the religious man who accepts the Christian community as the one which most closely reflects his own experience. He then adopts Christ as the model of his response, seeing in Him the model or incarnation of radical monotheistic faith. Through a life modeled upon that of the Christ symbol, understood in conjunction with other symbols, the Christian proceeds to interpret, and organize his response to God--individually and in community.¹

As to the role of symbol in the theologies of these three men, the following may be observed: By means of symbol Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr are able to articulate their respective theological syntheses. Rahner articulates a synthesis of Catholic doctrine, Eliade a rationale for the

¹Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit.,
p. 42.

religious world view of primitive man (with insights into the religious heritage of contemporary man). For Niebuhr such a synthesis may also be briefly outlined. Niebuhr may be said to use symbol as means of reception of communication of the sovereign God. It is also the means of spelling out response in radical monotheistic terms. The further specification of the response in symbol with the use of the root-symbols constitute the ethics of H. Richard Niebuhr.

One might go on with a further delineation of the comparable aspects of the theologies of the three men. Revelation for each is described as personal self-communication of God to man in man's subjectivity--a mysterious presence. Each describes this phenomenon through symbol. For Rahner, this communication takes place in the act of creation itself--man is so made.¹ For Eliade, man's attunement to symbolic communication is part of the human condition.² It is a mysterious type of communication, one which indicates presence without disclosing the nature of the one presenced. For H. Richard Niebuhr, revelation is a moment in man's inner history of such a nature and intensity that it gives meaning direction, and purpose to the whole of man's life.³

¹"Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," Theological Investigations, Vol. 1 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), p. 303.

²Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 11; Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 17.

³Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 122.

The response to which man is called, in each of these men, may be termed symbolic in that expression in the totality of man's being is demanded. If symbol be taken as the self-expression of a being whereby it constitutes itself in being and comes to a possession of self in knowledge and love, response to God for each of these men may be said to be likewise symbolic. Rahner calls for this symbolic response in indicating the role of the Christian to be the continuance of the presence of God in the world.¹ Such a symbolic response is called for also on the score that an integration of self in the light of the Christ is demanded if one is to continue the Christ presence.

Eliade calls for symbolic response, by the whole person, when he notes that on the basis of the decision to make the experience of transcendence central to the life and ~~value~~ structure of man, the whole of the life of man is cast in a religious frame.² Further, as revelation, is in symbolic terms, response entails the usage of secondary symbol to authenticate or sacralize the whole of the existence of man.

The response called for by H. Richard Niebuhr may also be termed symbolic. Radical monotheistic faith entails

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 240.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op.cit., p. 174.

styling one's self expression (symbol) in its totality in commitment to the one beyond the many.¹ The Christian for H. Richard Niebuhr is the one who accepts Christ as the incarnation of radical monotheistic faith and pledges himself like Christ to exemplification of the presence of God to men in his entire being. H. Richard Niebuhr further makes use of other symbols to structure the form of the response that is human life to more aptly reflect the Christ symbol.

For Rahner, in encountering the symbol, one encounters the person.² Grace is the personal presence of God to man in the economy of salvation. Response in terms of an integration of self and in terms of the assumption of the sign role entails continuing the personal presence of Christ among men, for men.

For Eliade, there is an almost universal perception of the Transcendent in terms which are personal. God is an infinite being who "cares" or must be induced to care for man. The response is personal in that men are summoned consciously to make sacred and authentic their lives and to keep themselves and their world attuned to the gods through the use of myth, rite, image, and symbol.³

¹Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit., p. 48.

²"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 245.

³Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 20; Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 142.

For Niebuhr, it is not the God of the philosophers, the principle of being, who reveals himself, but the "fate which lowers over us" who is known as a "being in community" with us. God reveals himself not as Sein but as Dasein.¹ For him, integration of self along lines of radical faith is the essence of the response. Again, in Christ, radical faith finds flesh and blood articulation and this articulation is symbol or paradigm for the response of man.

One of the advantages of a symbolic articulation of theology such as Rahner's is that while it preserves the gratuity of the gift of God's grace (presence), there is still made possible the placing of this presence and grace within the framework of human experience. Extrinsicism is not a problem as man, the de facto existence has always been constituted by God, in view of the Incarnational purpose of creation as man already graced in his humanity.² Man then, possessed of a supernatural existential, is enabled to perceive the action and presence of God in the depths of his human experience.

Mircea Eliade, beginning with human experience sets forth for man a possible explanation of the experiences which man has in the light of the self-communication of the

¹Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 112.

²"Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," op. cit., p. 300.

transcendent God. The arena for the divine-human inter-relation is precisely the human.¹

H. Richard Niebuhr's situation of the locus of revelation in inner history, also roots the revelation of the sovereign God within man's human experience.²

For each of these men, revelation is seen as presence. Rahner maintains ex professo that the salvific acts of God may and must be seen in terms of God's personal presence to man through symbol.³ For Eliade, the articulations of the experiential communications of God to man would certainly incline him to second the notion of communication of God to man in terms of presence.⁴ Niebuhr, in noting that in making the Christian assume a role similar to that of Christ himself, and becoming to the best of his ability an incarnation of radical monotheistic faith and responsibility, is calling for an understanding of God similar to Christ's. In so doing he is understanding revelation in terms of personal presence of the sovereign God.⁵

For these men revelation bears its own relevance and brings meaning to life. Revelation is a self-validating

¹Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 15.

²Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 50, 1.

³"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 245.

⁴Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 174-175.

⁵Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit., p. 48.

experience; it is not simply cognitive but affective also. Since for Rahner, the revelation of God to man is ongoing, creational and universal, the communication itself of God would explicate or bring to consciousness a situation which had already existed, God's revelation of self to man in all creation. As such, a communication of this kind would, upon perception "register" both in the cognitive and in the affective domain and would therefore "ring true".

Mircea Eliade indicates this self-validating character of the communication of God to man by describing it as an experiential communication and one which contains within it the invitation to respond. It is perceived as authentic, and reflective of deep insight to man, his human existence and the meaning he is to give to life. His free endorsement is solicited. Niebuhr explicitly maintains that the revelatory moment is a self-validating one and one which is vividly so perceived by one who responds.

Rahner directs the Christian to assume the sign role of Christ--he directs others to strive for the perfection of their beings, their relationships with others and the external world, and to await the possible further self-communication of the free God.¹ Eliade calls for the endorsement of the religious world view and a consistent attempt to live it through the use of myth, rite, image and symbol. Niebuhr calls for the radical monotheistic faith

¹Hearers of the Word, op. cit., p. 162.

response in terms which encompass the entire life of man and his every action.

The adoption of the religious worldview is based on a decision made in response to a valuational communication. For Rahner, revelation entails becoming aware of the situation of man as addressed creation by God, and response is commitment to that God. The commitment, for Rahner's Christian is in terms of continuing the sign presence of Christ--it is of such a nature that one can undertake this radical a reinterpretation of one's life only by a conscious and deliberate decision to so do.¹

With Eliade also, the experience of revelation or the experience of transcendence is universal. Interpretation of it along religious lines is not.² But where it is had, it must be had by explicit and definitive commitment to a religious ideal and a resolute decision to reinterpret one's life in its light.

Niebuhr specifically describes response in terms of radical faith. If man responds to God in radical monotheistic faith he does so with deliberate and definitive choice.³ He is ambiguous about the relationship of the religious man who responds in terms of radical monotheism, and the Christian

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 240, 1.

²Images and Symbols, op. cit., p. 12, 176.

³Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 13 ff.

who for him seems to be one who in addition sees Christ as the incarnation of radical faith. Yet in each instance it is a conscious decision which is called for.

For each of the three men there was an authentic response to revelation in a secular frame. For Rahner, creational revelation is co-extensive with mankind. Authentic response is indicated to be the integration of the self, and secondly awaiting possible further revelation from the one God. Because man's supernatural existential is present within every man as something of which man is not necessarily conscious, any response, individual or communal, sacred or secular is an authentic response to the one whom believers call the creator God.

Eliade indicates that the experience of transcendence is common property of every man. Interpretation of these experiences along religious lines is not universal. However, in defining the sacred as the "authentic", the really real, it would seem that Eliade would be allowing for an authentic response to this revelational experience in a secular dimension. This would not seem to hold for primitive man, to whom "holy" and "real" are one and the same. Yet with regard to modern man, granted the experience

¹"Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," op. cit., p. 300; "The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 229.

²Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 3-4.

of transcendence as part of the human condition, the options would be: adoption of a religious worldview; rejection of the religious worldview and response in a secular framework to Life, or to Being itself, however it be designated.

As to H. Richard Niebuhr, his entire description of radical monotheistic faith and his ethics of symbol in terms of responsibility are couched in terms which would make it possible for secular man to respond to the divine ideals without necessarily endorsing a specifically religious worldview.¹ For Niebuhr response to life is response to God dimly perceived or perceived not at all.

The revelatory moment is described by these men in terms which are indicative of its non-verbal or 'pre-conceptual' nature. By this is simply meant that the primary perception of revelation is a perception which is experiential initially and enriched afterwards through reflection thereupon.

Rahner's Vorgriff is a preconceptual apprehension of the universal esse as a 'horizon of consciousness', the universal scope of which is necessarily preapprehended if man is to conceptualize at all.

Eliade stresses the experiential character of revelation noting that it addresses itself to the affective as well as the cognitive domain of the whole man--this then is reflected upon and its implications as far as response, etc., serve to enrich man.

¹Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit.,
p. 24 ff.

Niebuhr also notes the affective and cognitive power of the revelatory moment, and indicates that it possesses illuminative power which encompasses the whole of man's being. It is the preconceptual in the sense that it is both affective and cognitive, and in that it comes to man by way of an 'insight' rather than by way of discursive reasoning.

With each of the three men, Christ becomes the symbol in the sense of paradigm or model for the individual Christian and the Christian community. In this way the Christian continues Christ's role--presencing God to the world.

Rahner would describe the role of the Christian as to individual and as to community in terms of continuing the sign presence of Christ in the world. As such, the life of Christ, his values, perspective, become the pattern for the life of a Christian.¹

Eliade, after describing the paradigmatic character of the actions of the gods and the need felt by primitive man to insure authenticity by going back to the time of the gods, indicates that inasmuch as Christianity holds forth Christ as model for imitation, Christianity partakes of the age-old religious heritage of man. The search for a paradigm

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 240.

which is part of all primitive religious thought, carries over into Christianity itself.¹

For H. Richard Niebuhr, response to the one beyond the many, the sovereign God, for the Christian can only be had by viewing Christ as the incarnation of radical monotheistic faith, and utilizing the Christ symbol to model one's response in like manner.² It is Christ also whom he sees as the model and incarnation of responsible man.

To speak further to the notion of Christ as real symbol, one notes that Eliade deals with the matter only peripherally since it is outside the immediate scope of his reflections. Niebuhr is a bit ambiguous. Though he accepts the trinity, he never articulated completely his reflections on trinity. In spelling out revelation and indicating that the object of revelation is the person of God and not of Christ, he seems at times to minimize Christ.³ Yet in speaking of the revelation of the Father or the person of the sovereign God, he does so solely through the eyes of Christ.⁴ Speaking of the 'revolution' effected in natural knowledge of God by the revelation of

¹Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit.,
p. 433-434.

²Faith and Ethics, op. cit., p. 66; Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit., p. 42.

³Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 107-110.

⁴Ibid., p. 113.

the Father of Jesus Christ, he de facto uses Christ as the real symbol of the Father. We know the Father only through the son. We learn the nature of God not simply through what Christ says about him but by the way Christ responds to him.

Rahner's doctrine on the real symbol simplifies matters considerably in this regard. In encountering Christ, we actually encounter the Father who communicates himself through the Logos in materiality. In living as Christ did, we are living as the Father both wished us to live and showed us to live.¹

One may speak of the basis for the acceptance of revelation. Let it be first noted that the sovereign God who communicates himself in subjectivity cannot become the object of man's knowledge in the same sense a dog, tree, or even another person can be. Secondly, the existence of God itself cannot be empirically verified. On the basis of the revelational experience, enough evidence is present to make endorsement plausible if one will live the mystery and paradox. Assent is solicited not compelled.

The basis on which the Christian worldview rises or falls, since it represents simply a possible interpretation of life, is the value that it has in the lives of others, and the fact that it rings true to the experience of every man. It is living of the Christ symbol by individuals and

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 239.

community, that will serve as the most eloquent basis on which one may induce others to risk faith commitment.

Lastly, there is a communal dimension to the response of man to revelation. For Rahner, response to general revelation in growth and maturation will be both individual and communal. Since man is relational, community is essential. In special revelation, individual as member of community is given the mandate of the sign presence of Christ for mankind.

In Eliade's articulation of the faith response of primitive man, a definite communal perspective is to be noted. For H. Richard Niebuhr, community is likewise necessary. Revelational response places man in community and through symbol he assimilates the community's historical experience as his own.

Resume

Karl Rahner, Mircea Eliade, and H. Richard Niebuhr have several points of congruence as they set forth their thinking about the relationship of God to man. Each of them use revelation as the starting point of his thought. Revelation is conceived to be an ongoing and dynamic personal self-communication of God to man. Revelation is located in man's human experience itself. Revelation is explained through symbol.

Symbol for each of the men may be seen as the self-expression of a being whereby it renders itself present to

another. As such it serves as the synthesizing factor for his thinking, since for each revelation is the context of his theology and symbol is the means of explicating that revelation. Response, for each of the men, is spoken of in terms of symbol, in the sense that the entire person of man, i.e. the totality of man's self-expression, is to be fashioned after the model of Christ.

Rahner dwells chiefly on the philosophic approach to symbol, and the synthesizing possibilities of symbol are found most clearly in his thought. Eliade highlights the experiential character of the initial revelations of God to primitive man. The synthesizing possibilities are exploited to some extent, but nowhere fully. In H. Richard Niebuhr's work, because of the lack of precision with regard to symbol in the real sense of the term, one must dig deep to uncover the synthetic possibilities--yet they are present.

Whereas Rahner limits himself to the real symbol--the most fundamental way in which a being "represents", Eliade and Niebuhr exploit more fully the symbol making dimension of man. Eliade's reflections are in the realm of religious life and Niebuhr's in the formulation of his ethical thought. The correlation of the thinking of these men has implications for religious education which will be analyzed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE THINKING OF RAHNER, ELIADE, AND NIEBUHR FOR CONTEMPORARY CATECHESIS

Generally speaking, the observations made relative to symbol in the study thus far, indicate that symbol refers to the process whereby a being expresses itself in otherness. Symbol also refers to the term of the process: symbol is the self expression of the being in otherness which in varying degrees is the being.¹ Viewed from the manner in which the communication takes place, one speaks of symbolic communication as being somewhat different from simple verbal communication. It is conceived to be an "experiential" communication, one addressed to the whole man.²

Each of the three men studied have situated the point of contact between man and God in "symbolic" communication. For Rahner this point of contact is rooted in the

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 234.

²Myths and Reality, op. cit., p. 12.

attunement of the agent intellect to universal being itself.¹ It is an a priori, pre conceptual attunement which is the necessary preliminary for any knowing activity. For Eliade the point of contact lies in human nature's innate receptivity to symbolic or experiential communication.² Eliade describes this communication as one made "to the whole person", one which differs from verbal or simple conceptual communication. Niebuhr roots the point of contact between God and man in a receptivity to valuational communication in man's subjectivity or "inner history".³ It is an experiential communication which is self validating and which serves to facilitate the understanding of the rest of man's life.

Each of the men stress the initiative of God in this self-communication. Each is appreciative of the disparity in nature between God and man--the partners in dialogue, and each makes this revelatory act of God the basis for his reflection, on the approach man makes to life. Yet each stresses different aspects of symbolic communication.

Rahner deals with symbol as process; he centers the attention on the most fundamental manner in which being

¹Spirit in the World, op. cit., p. 136.

²Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 39, 157.

³The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 50-51, 122.

represents; viz, the process whereby being to constitute itself, represents itself to itself in otherness, and thereby comes to possession of self in knowledge and love.¹ Secondly, he uses symbol in this sense to explain how man knows,² and thereby the kind of being man is. He utilizes this notion further to describe how God Himself a symbolic being first came to show Himself to man;³ lastly, Rahner uses symbol to explain how God so conducts Himself towards man that his entire plan of salvation consists in making Himself present to man through symbol.⁴

Eliade also uses symbol to describe God's way of communicating Himself to man. He dwells upon those elements in space and time that God makes use of to awaken within man an experiential knowledge of his presence and his concern.⁵ For Eliade, man is symbol maker in his response. He creates symbols and thereby expresses in analogous fashion his response to the mysterious⁶ God symbolically perceived. He

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 229.

²Ibid., p. 230 & 231.

³Hearers of the Word, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 245.

⁵Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 238.

⁶Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 174.

further draws attention to man's usage of symbol in his man to man relationships. Symbol as process is found in his thought also, e.g. he speaks of the growth and maturation process as initiatory and hence symbolic.¹

Niebuhr uses symbol in the experiential sense (though not calling it such) to indicate the manner in which the sovereign God makes his presence known in man's subjectivity-inner history. For him it is a self-validating and "meaning-giving" type of communication.² In describing the radical monotheistic faith response, he speaks of symbol as process, i.e. the total self-expression of man is cast in the framework of radical faith commitment.³ He also deals with symbol as process when he speaks of the God of Jesus Christ as the "model" which makes it necessary for us to revolutionize our understanding of God.⁴ Here the Christological ambiguity is still a problem but in as much as Niebuhr does speak of our knowing about God through knowing the God of Jesus Christ, one can conclude God in some ways reveals himself in Christ for H. Richard Niebuhr. Lastly, Niebuhr's forte is man the

¹Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 3.

²The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 80.

³Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, op. cit.,
p. 48.

⁴The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 120 ff.

symbol maker in that he uses symbol to organize, interpret reality.¹ In as much as such a symbol directs the response of the whole person, it might be termed a usage of symbol as process. For each of these scholars, man is homo symbolicus. Rahner draws out the theological and philosophic implications of symbol in the radical sense of the term. Eliade explicates the experiential dimension of revelatory and secondary symbol, and the historic. Finally, Niebuhr sheds light on the theological, ethical and cognitional implications. The religious educator today has much to learn from these men.

It is the position of this study that from the insights of Karl Rahner, Mircea Eliade and H. Richard Niebuhr on symbol, the following may be drawn: (1) A religious world view comprehensible to contemporary man; (2) A theological overview which enables catechist to provide a context as well as content for contemporary catechesis; (3) Guidelines for catechetical approach and method.

Religious Man in the Modern World

The basis of the religious worldview is a decision to accept, as a possible explanation of man's life and experience, the existence of a creator God who "cares for" man.² Within the experience of every man is the gnawing

¹Responsible Self, op. cit., p. 151.

²The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 112.

quest for meaning which grips him from time to time and prompts him to ask the ultimate questions: What is man? What is the meaning of life? How is one to conduct one's life? What values are lasting? How did man come to be? Is Someone ultimately responsible for this existence into which I come without asking, from which I will depart without my consent?

Inklings of possible answers are also part of the human experience. Within every man are present "intimations of immortality", longing for a better world, a higher life; perception in some mysterious fashion of what Otto termed the mysterium tremendum et fascinans, a sense of the ganz andere.¹ By these words are indicated man's experience in the depths of his being of the presence of a higher, loftier form of existence in which the contingencies of earthly life are not had. It involves in a vague and mysterious way the perception of what some have interpreted to be the presence of a being totally above man, one who has a care and concern for man. In the past history of mankind, there is recorded both the experience and a possible interpretation--the existence and creative action of a supreme and necessary being who is concerned with man.²

¹Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy (A Galaxie Book; New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 8-40.

²Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, op. cit., p. 174; Patterns of Comparative Religion, op. cit., p. 38.

This interpretation was not universal in the past; it is not universal today. Yet in the past and today, there are several who interpret the experience as a summons by a supreme being, an invitation to acceptance of Himself. These individuals in varying ways seek to interpret their whole lives in terms of the Supreme Being they acknowledge, seeing in the experience the attempt on the part of that Being to communicate with man.¹ They then assume the responsibility of defining their values and priorities in terms of that Being whom they call God.

Another aspect of the human dimension is the radical experience of the absurdity of life.² This comes in the form of an experiential realization of the contingency of man's existence. Man finds that all that is most precious and worthwhile to him is beclouded by his own mortality; his is an existence in which even his noblest strivings are to come to an end. It is an experience in the depths of man's being which rocks him to the core and carries home to him the crushing burden of a life whose transient character makes no effort worth while; a life in which at times the only course for an honest man is suicide as the solitary route for escape from absurdity.

¹The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 111.

²Rites and Symbols of Initiation, op. cit., p. 135.

In the face of situations such as these, which in one form or another are part of the experience of every man, a thinking man will realize that he can respond by creating his own perspective of meaningfulness. Only by so doing can mature man continue in existence. Religious man is the man who faced with the paradoxical experiences of transcendence, and contingency, resolves the crisis by interpreting the experience of transcendence as the self-communication of a personal God who experientially (symbolically) addresses himself to man inviting him to acknowledge His presence and to manage his existence in response to God.¹ Profane man is the man who creates meaning for his existence in terms which preclude the existence and concern of a transcendent God and interpret their lives by other lights. Each, religious and profane man find some peace and meaning when he has faced life, made an intelligible interpretation of its meaning, and assumed the responsibility for living his life consistently in light of that interpretation. In resume, religious man then is the man who has accepted the invitation to interpret his life as response to a supreme being seen as communicating himself as person to man through these symbolic experiences. He accepts the responsibility of organizing his life, its meaning, and values in the light of this "God who cares". Historically, he has felt a need to join others who think

¹The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 101, 111.

similarly. Together with them he reaffirms and celebrates, and lives his response, viewing himself as responsible to that God for the meaningful conduct of his life. In the community which he joins to celebrate the mystery that is life he finds the necessary support and the encouragement to so do.

Such a presentation as this would speak to contemporary man. It offers him a possible interpretation of human experience in the light of the religious world-view. Entailed is a value judgement. Acceptance is based on evidence insufficient to secure absolute certitude. It is interpretational. Lastly, it involves responsibility for a life consonant with this decision.

An Overview for Roman Catholic Catechesis

The insights of Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr also provide the broad framework for an effective catechesis to contemporary man. In the thought of each of the men, such a catechesis must be confessional in character, since it is based on acceptance of an interpretation for life that includes a God Who has a concern for man.¹ The confessional catechesis for which guidelines will be developed will be Roman Catholic. The reasons for this choice lie in the fact that it is the largest single religious denomination,

¹Ibid., p. 13 ff.

580,470,000,¹ and secondly the changes in the contemporary world have visibly affected her perhaps to a greater extent than has been true of other denominations.

The insights of Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr indicate that the context for the whole of theology must be that of revelation,² i.e. the "self-communication" of God to man.

One might begin as follows: "The purpose of creation was the Incarnation, the self-communication of God in the otherness which was space and time."³

Because of God's decision to communicate himself in otherness, man came to be. If the ultimate purpose of creation was, for reasons too weighty to be probed at this point, the self-communication of God, this is what was primary in his intention, and all subsidiary actions of God were geared to this end. In the divine will was the decision that this self-communication be in space and time, elements which were created as was the entire human milieu as context for the self-communication of God. Since it was as man that God resolved to communicate self, and since it was as man from among men, human nature's raison d'etre was the Incarnation. Because Incarnation for man ultimately

¹Dan Golen Paul, Information Please Almanac - 1970 (New York: Dan Golenpaul Assoc., November, 1969), p. 445.

²The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 30-31.

³"Remarks on Dogmatic Treaties 'De Trinitate'", op. cit., p. 94.

meant communication of God to man through Man, such was the intention of God from the beginning.¹ Consequently, from the first moment of his existence, man was possessed of a supernatural orientation. Rahner terms this supernatural orientation located in the depth of the human spirit a "supernatural existential".² For him, man was so created that in the a priori structures of his consciousness there is an attunement to God. It meant that God was present to man, the de facto existent being, and while this presence was not strictly due man, it was as a matter of fact part of man from the beginning.

As an existential, man was not necessarily aware of it--in fact, need never become aware of it. Yet it is present de facto as a structure of his consciousness. This existential is part of man located in the depths of his human awareness, and is perceptible to his human consciousness, that is, it could become so. Though part of man's make-up, it is undue him and is placed there as gift, a gratuity. This revelation or self-communication of God might be termed creational or general and apposed to the concept of special revelation, or revelation in Christ. Rahner pinpoints this supernatural existential in the agent

¹Ibid.

²Karl Rahner, "Relationship Between Nature and Grace," Theological Investigations, Vol. 1 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), p. 303.

intellect which possesses a preconceptual attunement to universal being, necessary to man, if he is to know at all.¹ Response to this general revelation, the perception of which comes in varying ways to man in the course of his life, could be termed individual, inasmuch as it rises out of the individual's consciousness. In the process of going out to others that is preliminary to a being's self-constitution, self-acceptance and self-awareness, man becomes aware of the experience of transcendence to which he is himself in some mysterious way responsive. Such a perception can lead him to the recognition of a God who cares for him and takes this means to render Himself present to him. This experiential communication while not productive of a certitude that there is a God who cares, is perceived as capable of being so interpreted, particularly in the light of man's history. The experience of transcendence constitutes an invitation to man to interpret his life in its light. This means acceptance of God as the cause of his being. It also entails recognizing the obligation in fidelity to this God to develop individually and communally as humans in response to Him. In a word, the whole of man's life (his symbolic self-expression) is modeled upon faithful

¹Spirit in the World, op. cit., p. 145; Hearers of the Word, op. cit., p. 16.

response to the faithful God. Latent in this revelation is the realization that further communication by God to man is possible.¹ Such a communication would necessarily be in the realm of history and of human experience. This general revelation to all men found, finds, and will find many and varied ways to know, love and serve God, ways that are both individual and collective.

In relation to the general revelation of God to all men, the Christian sees "special revelation" in Christ as the awaited fulfilment of the self-communication of God begun in creation.² It is an unlooked for bonanza--this fulness of the self-communication of God in symbol since it presences the Deity Himself in a fashion in which man can grasp him. Full and total presence of God to man, Christ is the most eloquent of symbols and by his being he indicates that the most eloquent of the God symbols is in fact man. Self-expression of the Father through the Logos in materiality, he is the presence of the Triune God in the world of space and time, the tangible sign of God's self-communicating love, a man like us in all things. The Christ in the process of maturation which we term with Rahner "symbolic", in going out to others becomes aware of self as the possessor of a

¹Hearers of the Word, op. cit., p. 162.

²"Remarks on Dogmatic Treaties De Trinitate," op. cit., p. 70.

unique supernatural existential--rather, in the process of achieving self-awareness as person, he becomes conscious that his personhood is that of the Logos.

As the fulness of the self-communication of God to man, Christ filled a symbolic role--he presenced God among men.¹ The presence which he effected told men that the God they longed for was all around them--was person--was one ultimately concerned with them. It was this role which Christ gave to the juridically constituted group which followed him; they are men summoned to the task of symbolically presencing God to others.² Church then as Rahner and Schillebeeckx indicate, is the proto-sacrament.³ It presences God among men as did Christ. Church, like Christ, is the presence of the Father through the Logos in materiality, Christ extended in space and time. The most apt attribute of Church in this perspective, most fitting challenge is: To be "Emmanual"--"God with us". It is the task of her membership singly and as community to demonstrate to the family of man that God is in their midst.

Response to the special revelation that is Christ entails acceptance of Christ as the fulness of the self-communication of God. It entails further the responsible

¹"The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 237.

²Ibid., p. 240-241.

³The Church and the Sacraments, op. cit., p. 14.

assumption within the community of the faithful of the sign role of Christ. Through the symbol that is his total life, the Christian is to "stand for" or "represent" or "be" expression of God's loving presence among men.¹ In actual fact, this is accomplished by the incorporation of the vision, attitudes, life-pattern and ideals of Christ into one's own life and the life of the community.² It is important to note that this is an on-going task, one which will feature various degrees of accomplishment and effectiveness through the ages. Recognition of the limited character of her exemplification of the Christ sign should foster an internal spirit of metanoia on the part of a pilgrim Church painfully aware of her sinfulness.³ Serving as sign to the nations, the church effects a catalytic presence upon the world, bringing to consciousness by her being and mission of service the supernatural existential in every man, and welcoming into her membership those who come to see in her the presence of God among men.

To the world the Church has much to say--but she must say it by being, not verbalizing.⁴ She must say: God is alive and among us; to us he is our very life. ... Church demonstrates visibly in her community life, the

¹This follows from the role of the Church as real symbol. "The Theology of the Symbol in Karl Rahner," op. cit., p. 241.

²Responsible Self, op. cit., pp. 149, 161, 164.

³The Meaning of Revelation, op. cit., p. 87.

⁴The Church and the Sacraments, op. cit., p. 31.

fact that the brotherhood of man under God is possible. Within herself she stands as sign to man that his longings for immortality are rooted in fact since in this community are found men who, because they take the resurrection with ultimate seriousness, have the courage to make sacrifices to strive for brotherhood. Moreover, through hope in resurrection they have the courage to follow the program of their founder: "Love one another as I have loved you," thereby bearing witness to the fact that God has moved the center of meaning for man to a point beyond life. In this perspective, the sacraments are the ways in which the church actualizes herself as presence of Christ for man.¹ She is herself the Sacrament of the World. In this way she "preaches the Good News" to man.

With a view to coming to a sense of Christian identity, Catholic identity, in the context of the broader community of man, one could explore the implications of general and special revelation somewhat more deeply.

Man's response to general revelation is through acknowledgement of the existence of God and commitment to living the human ideal to the fullest. Man's commitment to God within the framework of general revelation is extremely broad. Since this self-communication of God to man is present to man as an existential, man may never come to an awareness of what is de facto a Godward

¹Ibid., p. 22.

orientation. His non-acceptance or better nescience, however, does not change the state of affairs. When an individual responds to the perception of transcendence and of value, however he interprets it, such an individual is de facto responding to God. In similar fashion, when man responds religiously to the general self-communication of God, whatever form this religious response takes constitutes authentic response to God. This is the reason Rahner, Eliade, and Niebuhr would tell the Roman Church to acknowledge to a far greater degree the authentic revelation of God through non-Christian, primitive, and non-theistic interpretations of life than has been done in several hundred years. Since the self-communication of God is as broad as creation or mankind itself, so too is the response. It is for this reason that Mircea Eliade makes the interesting remark that the religions of the pagans which so temptingly lured Israel from Yahweh's service, were the bearers of an authentic revelation of God.¹ This notion is important for the Church today since today while all men are recipients of the general revelation of God, not all are bound by the response commitment of the special revelation in Christ. Yet all, sacred and secular, individual and communal, Christian and non-Christian, forms of response are in varying degrees authentic response to God and must be considered seriously as such.

¹Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, op. cit., p. 142.

One may distinguish between sacred and secular response yet the arena in which the God-man dynamic takes place remains that of human experience. The interpretation differs. Man who responds to general revelation in a religious vein, will recognize in himself a being blessed by God and given native endowments and abilities which he will be constrained to use in expressing his Godward commitment. Profane man, the one who responds to the summons of "life", "nature", etc., will also respond by the development of his abilities. Both will use these talents creatively as response to their respective visions of life. With them they will seek to bring order and harmony from chaos. They bring order and harmony to the chaos that is an undisciplined and undirected self, the chaos that is the area of human relationships disrupted by a history of sin; the chaos that is the physical world itself which only reluctantly bends to his creative power and jealously keeps locked the gates to her mysteries. So doing each responds to God. The response is a total one since it involves the shaping of his entire life in accord with a vision and a dedication. By achieving maturity, managing in love the relationships with others that form part of the nature of man, and striving to bring form and beauty to the physical world which is raw material to his creativity, man fulfills the injunction which is reflected in Genesis: "Rule (dominate) the earth", and in the nature of man's make up. In this fashion human progress may be seen as response of man to God rather

than cause for concern because the wonders of technology are causing men to forget God.

Against this background, one must discuss special revelation. The special revelation of God to the world in Christ is, in one sense, the term of the process of God's self-communication to man. It is the fullest explicitation of,¹ and the objectification of, the communication begun in man's consciousness in creational revelation. In creational revelation it was realized that further communication by God to man was possible. It was also recognized that such a communication, were it a fact, would have to take place in history and would have somehow to be perceptible to man therein.¹ Christ is this self-communication in its fulness.

Response to special revelation in Christ is in terms of continuation of the symbolic presence of God in the world.² This continuation of the Symbolic presence of Christ in the world is not a static notion but a dynamic one. With Christ, men today continue to be the healing, reconciling, encouraging, ennobling presence of God within the family of man. Christ thus continues to be exemplar that the brotherhood of man is possible, that the nobility of the human ideal can be lived, but that at times it costs a fearful price. Bouyed by faith in resurrection the church

¹Hearers of the Word, op. cit., p. 162.

²The Church and the Sacraments, op. cit., p. 18.

in her on-going life exemplifies a position poised midway between the "already" and the "not yet". She witnesses to the eschatologically victorious character of God's love for man. Tangibly represented within her as sign are individuals who in view of the kingdom to come serve more directly as signs of the eschatological dimension of the kingdom.¹ These are those who through "religious life" serve as more direct signs to the "not yet" dimension of the kingdom, in the midst of the sign community who are more directly witnesses to the "already". It belongs to the latter to "build the earth" and to second the Genesis approbation, "And God saw that it was good," while at the same time seeing it in the perspective also of the "not yet". Without devaluation of the human dimension, the eschatological witness serves to presence the eschatological aspect of the kingdom to the Christian community.² It does this through symbolic presence.

The Christian then is the man who over and above the response called for by general revelation in terms of the living of the human ideal assumes the responsibility of presencing the Christ, the fulness of the self-communication of God to man. To those addressed by general revelation he stands as sign of hope, eschatological sign, catalyst

¹Ibid.

²Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation," Theological Investigations, Vol. 3 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1967), p. 47-57.

fostering dedication to God by others within their respective framework of religious understanding or secular perceptiveness.

Since the relationship of God to man is mystery, one may approach from several directions. While it is true that within the framework of Roman Catholic dedication, there is one way of responding to Christ's presence among us, the degree to which the church lives that one way may well be lacking at varying periods of time. The church must assume the responsibility of living the sign and be fearful lest she not presence Christ well to man. The fact that mystery is the characteristic of the God-man relationship and God speaks in general revelation to all men at creation, must dictate a greater understanding on the part of the Catholic Church of de facto religious pluralism even within the context of Christian commitment. Ecumenical efforts must be taken seriously and less emphasis placed upon verbal formulations of mystery which by nature can only be partial and inadequate albeit true.¹

Guidelines for the Catechist

Thus far the insights on symbol of Karl Rahner, Mircea Eliade, and H. Richard Niebuhr have provided a rationale for the religious world view which would be

¹Karl Rahner, "The Development of Dogma," Theological Investigations, Vol. 1 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), p. 43.

comprehensible to contemporary man. Secondly, they have provided an overview within the context of which an effective presentation of the teachings of the Catholic church can be placed, one which will provide a sense of Catholic and Christian identity in an age of secularism and of religious pluralism. At this point there may be drawn from the symbolic insights of the three men, guidelines for the task of the catechist. These will be listed in several categories which at times may well overlap.

1. Catechesis

a. Catechesis is to be conceived as the possible interpretation to man of his human experience in the light of the Christ event.

b. The starting point for catechesis is the experience of man. Here takes place the self-communication of God to man as person. Here takes place the response of man to God.

c. Since man from the first moment of creation was the recipient of the self-communication of God (supernatural existential), catechesis consists in creating in man an awareness of his de facto supernatural orientation, making him aware of the fulness of that presence of God to man in Christ, and exploring the implications of the creational and Christic revelations in terms of his life.

d. Catechesis of symbol is centered in Christ.

This is not to say that one begins with Christ but it is to say that if Christ is the fulness of the self-communication of God to man, then the Christian must derive his sense of identity from Christ in the midst of the religious and secular pluralism of the times.

e. The creation of a self-concept for the Catholic in the context of Christianity and mankind as a whole, must be spelled out in symbol. In the context of a mankind already addressed by God creationally, the Christian stands as a continuation of the Christ, who himself was the visible presence of the loving mercy of God toward man. To men already de facto attuned to God in the depths of their being, though (because of the nature of that attunement as an 'existential') not always aware of such an orientation, the Christian is a supplementary sign of the concern and love of God for man. His existence is to further the certitude in men that there is a God who cares. He is further to serve as sign of hope for resurrection by reason of the caliber of his self-sacrificing life and that of the church of which he is part.

Relative to a sense of Catholic identity, the rifts in the Christian community may be presented as having arisen by reason of the Church's failure to

live up to her sign role. The resolution of these problems of union will be forthcoming only when each of the churches begins living the fulness of the Christ sign. In the meantime, the symbolic unity of the Churches in responding to Christ through the sacrificial meal which he instituted may be celebrated liturgically, if one, emphasizing the "mystery" character of the reality, and the inadequacy of human means of expression, celebrates the response as mystery, leaving the understanding of the mystery to the degree such is possible to the various Christian groups.

f. The approach catechesis takes must be invitational. The basis of acceptance is a value judgement. The adequacy of the interpretation to provide an explanation for life, and the value of the Christian way of life as exemplified in individuals and in the church are the greatest selling points.

g. Catechesis must spell out response in terms of a dynamic process involving the whole of an individual's life and the life of the community. Man responding to revelation in any context is summoned to the development of his personhood, the development of community with his fellows, and lastly the development of his creative potential in "building the earth".

2. The Catechist

a. The catechist must be conscious of the fact that his own symbolic self-expression, his own image as a person is one of the most important elements in catechesis. His life-style, embodying the values and perspective of Christ speaks most eloquently to his audience.

b. The catechist must have a strong consciousness of his own self identity as a Catholic Christian if he is to impart this to others. He must both know and be able to communicate who he is, how he is related to other believers, how he is related to all men. Only in this way can he address himself to the insecurity and lack of a sense of identity on part of large segments of the Christian community.

c. The catechist must seek to know and understand through his study and experience all that he can about man and the human dimension--in knowing man he comes to know God. He must have a love for man, an understanding of human nature. He must further know the milieu in which he lives, and the anxieties, stresses and tensions which are part of the modern world and the experience of his students. He must direct his catechesis to the real experience of real men.

d. The catechist must be ready to learn from the secular sciences all they have to tell him as to how man grows, thinks and develops.

e. He must appreciate and communicate an appreciation of the church as sign community, recognizing both the need for ongoing metanoia in the light of past failures, and the importance of Resurrection in the achievement of a sense of self identity.

f. The catechist must have an appreciation for the pluralistic and ecumenical context of our times. This will entail recognition that there may well have to be several levels of catechesis addressed to the differing experiences reflected in his audience.

g. The catechist must have an appreciation for symbol as a means of communication and utilize to the fullest this power to communicate with man in the depths of his being.

3. Transcendence--Mystery

a. The catechist must be aware of the transcendence of God in his work and be able to communicate an appreciation for transcendence to his charges. It is the transcendent God who reveals himself to man as person, both in the depths of the experience of every man, and, in His Fulness, Christ.

b. Because transcendence immanentizes itself in the incarnation of Christ as man, the dignity of man may be more readily seen, and explicated. Because creation is incarnational, man and the whole human dimension may be seen as the "context for incarnation". When God decided to communicate himself in

otherness, man came to be. Man, as the most eloquent symbol of God after the pattern of Christ, stands undisputably as lord and master of creation.

c. The catechist must be conscious of the disparity of persons in the God-man dialogue. All God-talk is analogous. God, in revealing himself to man does so in symbol, an "experiential" and "pre-verbal" communication which enables him to effect his presence without disclosing his intimate nature. When God reveals himself to man, in symbol, the mystery is not explicated. It simply draws near to us.

d. The catechist must consequently convey as well as embody an appreciation for mystery. The prime response to mystery in the positive sense is awe, silence.

e. The catechist will recognize his limitations. Mystery can never be exhaustively encapsulated in conceptual categories. The richness that is mystery in the positive sense of the term can first of all never be adequately communicated in words. Moreover, it can be viewed from many different perspectives. Consequently the catechist will place doctrinal affirmations about God in proper context--neither minimizing them nor exaggerating their importance.

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f. From this context it is apparent that the religious catechist must possess and foster a tolerance and understanding for all religious and secular responses to life. Because of the general character of creational revelation's response, he will recognize as authentic response to God, all man's individual and collective attempts to place meaning in life.

g. Within the church, the catechist will be constrained to point out that unity is not uniformity, and that there are several "theologies" and several "approaches to catechesis".

4. Symbol

a. The nature of symbol as an instrument of communication, its ability to address itself to both the affective and the cognitive aspects of man, its ability to speak to man on a conscious and a subconscious level, as well as its ability to serve as means of expression for things which cannot be said in any other way, make symbol an element the catechist can ill afford to ignore.

b. The catechist must be aware of the synthesizing power of the real symbol--its ability to provide an overview into which the various aspects of the Christian interpretation of life may be integrated. Such an overview performs a valuable function in

making possible the spelling out of a sense of Catholic identity, and Christian identity in the changing pluralism that is modern society.

c. The power of experiential symbol as a means of communication makes it of considerable value to the catechist. Catechesis has to do with creation of an awareness of God in men. When faced with the same problem, God made use of symbol and addressed himself to the whole man. The catechist will utilize man's receptivity to symbolic communication in an attempt thereby to tap the core of man's being, secure involvement and participation.

d. The catechist may use symbol in teaching by creating experiences which then serve as a base for discussion, e.g. audio visuals, participation, interview.

e. In a teaching situation, a dialogic situation, the catechist may facilitate communication by using symbol to articulate a tension-ridden situation for discussion. He may request articulation of fears, insights, responses in various art media--pictures, sculpture, drama, etc.

f. The catechist, through symbol, can show the interconnectedness and inner meaning of various theological doctrines.

g. Symbol may be used by the catechist to indicate the on-going character of revelation and the process and growth inherent in living response to the revealing God.

h. Symbol enables the catechist to enunciate a theology of salvation in terms of the presence of God to man, through symbol.

i. If Church is in process, performance will vary. Metanoia is an ongoing need. The Church will be alert for and avoid professionalism, externalism, legalism and conformism. In the past, church can be seen as responsible for the Reformation by not fully living up to her sign presence. She must see herself along lines of movement rather than institution, of pilgrim and sinful church rather than one modeled upon the empire or secular government.

j. The Catechist must pay serious heed to symbolic communication. This is particularly true, since every man makes of childhood an archetypal experience. Consequently, it is important to surround childhood with an appreciation for the religious dimension. This is best done through symbol. In light of this phenomenon regarding childhood experiences, and in light of the importance of childhood in the formation of ideals and values that last throughout the persons' life, the catechist will develop adult education programs which will create in parents a consciousness of their own symbolic teaching role.

k. Catechists should utilize the symbol making facet of man for such purposes as the securing of involvement, the precipitation of discussion of tension-ridden situations, to surface fears, and to elicit response.

l. The symbol making facet of man is of value in spelling out the Christian life, first in the use of the Christ-life as the model for the behavior and management of life of man, and secondly to determine what the perspective, value, commitment and approach of the Christian is to be.

m. The catechist must himself be capable of reading the signs around him. In interpersonal communications, there are symbolic locutions of man which express his state of mind much more accurately than his verbalizations. Society also speaks to man in the symbols to which it relates at any time, e.g. when the film, The Parable, and the book, Feast of Fools, by Harvey Cox, both very popular items in the field of religious education, speak of Christ as a clown, the catechist may see in the response to this symbol an attunement to a conception of Christ which sees him as standing aside, somewhat, from the world in order to critique that world. Comparison of this image of Christ with that which is current in the theology of the day, may indicate how well theology is addressing itself to man's real experience.

The present popularity of science fiction, the occult, the demonic, the eastern religions with their esoteric and mysterious contemplative forms of response, read symbolically, can say to the catechist: You have taken the mystery out of religious life, you have said too much; you have advocated too much action, too much involvement, not enough about prayer.

The same might be said of the revolutionary movements of youth, the flight into a drug culture, the pacifism, the sexual openness, the liberties which are present in today's society. These must be read and discussed along the lines of symbol if man the catechist is truly to perform his task of knowing the world of his audience and reading the signs of the times.

n. The theology which is set forth from the symbolic framework is one which is Christ-centered, one which is incarnational, and one which is revelational. Catechisis must begin where man is and it must interpret for man his human experience in the light of Christ.

5. Presence

a. For these men the central category of theology is the self-communication of God to man as person, God's effecting his presence to man through symbol.

Thus the catechist can spell out man's response in similar fashion, continuing the Christ-presence of Emmanuel--God with us.

b. The catechist can spell out the format of this dynamic presence in terms of service: "Whatever you did to one of these the least of my brethren, you did to me." "Love one another as I have loved you." Following these injunctions the catechist may spell out the terms of the presence. The presence is a healing one, hope-giving, eschatological, and catalytic. This provides the catechist with a beautiful way of spelling out the role of the church in response to Christ.

6. The Human Dimension

a. The human dimension must be presented as the context for the incarnation. It too has a Godward orientation. Were it not for the incarnation, man would never have existed.

b. Man and his world must be the starting point for catechetics. To know God one must know man and to know man one must know man in context--his world with its ever changing complexion.

c. If the catechist is to be effective in communicating with contemporary man, he must know how to read the signs of the times. He must also know his audience, the stresses and strains under which

men labor. He must be aware of the insights of the behavioral and social sciences. The catechist would also be considerably helped by a love for man and a sense of compassion.

d. The catechist spells out response to God's revelation in the human dimension. Through his struggles to achieve maturity, his struggles to form community and his strivings to build the earth, man is responding to God in creativity, responsibility and initiative.

e. The symbolic perspective enables the catechist to enunciate well the need for a total response in the whole of man's life to the revealing God.

f. Through an appreciation of the symbolic dimension of man's existence, the catechist is enabled to avoid an extrinsicism in speaking of the God-man relationship. He is able to speak of grace as something which falls within the ambit of man's conscious experience.

g. The symbolic approach to catechesis also enables the catechist readily to explain how in responding to life, man is in fact responding to the God who through the universe and the human dimension presences himself to man.

h. Man's approach to life in the context of a creative response to the revealing God within the

realm of the human involves placing meaning in reality. By his direction of his life in accord with the nature which he possesses and the commitment which he assumes, man approaches life actively and places meaning therein.

7. Person

a. The catechist must appreciate and convey an appreciation of the fact that person is one of the central themes of the Christian Weltanschauung. In a symbolic perspective, person is the ultimate and most complete way in which God presences himself to man. It is also the path towards the fullest possible response of man to God. Man through an integrated personhood, is able to continue the "Emmanuel" presence of Christ in the world.

b. Person is the way God presences himself to man, e.g. the way in which God presences his love for individual man as an individual is through the love of one human being for another. Secondly, in an incarnational perspective, the model of the love relationship between God and man is that of man and woman. As such, man's relationship with God may be conceived as a task rather than an achievement. Thirdly, man must have time "alone with" God. Fourthly, man must be aware of his commitment to "be for" and to "do for" God.

c. The catechist must preach person as one of the prime human values. All other values give way before it. A catechesis of person may be developed through a perusal of the Gospels with a view to detecting the manifold occasions when Christ placed person before law.

d. Development of personhood, relationship with others, and exercise of creativity also flow forth from the premise of person as the path to fullest response to the God who saw his most complete self expression in terms of person.

e. Of crucial importance to achieve personhood with the creativity and initiative and positive stance towards reality which it implies is freedom. Freedom must be one of the themes of the catechesis and part of the lived witness of the church.

f. One may be said to witness to Christ, to continue the sign presence of Christ through the development of his personhood, thereby to "be" the person of Christ.

8. Faith

a. The catechist must present the faith in a confessional perspective. His enunciation of the religious worldview is contingent upon the faith decision. The faith decision itself is one which entails a value judgement; it is one which cannot be empirically verified.

b. The faith decision for these men is one which is interpretational. Consequently, the catechist must so present the faith that it is seen that the experience of all men is the same while the interpretation placed upon it by men differs.

c. Catechesis in a sense becomes a "selling of the interpretation". Consequently, the value of the faith in motivating man to the highest human performance and witness generally are important in catechesis.

d. It is important to note also that problems with faith are interpretational problems. When one experiences "doubts" the injunction to "pray" is not an effective one. Prayer has validity only within the framework of the faith perspective which itself is being called into question.

e. The task of catechesis then is one of dialoging to explore the implications of the faith dedication and the achieving of motivation and direction for consistent living of the interpretation decided upon.

f. Responsibility for the consistent interpretation and ongoing commitment is something which is thrust upon the shoulders of the individual.

g. The catechist must teach the notion that the commitment must be total--its achievement is gradual.

9. Resurrection--Eschatological

a. Without an eschatological dimension, without taking resurrection seriously, it is impossible that a Christian identity be formed in an age of pluralism both religious and secular. Catechesis and Christianity would be sterile and meaningless.

b. Hope in resurrection must be presented by the catechist as changing our value structure.

c. Because of the resurrection, the sign presence of the church is that of an entity poised between the "already" and the "not yet".

d. In the light of resurrection, in the light of eschatology, and in the light of the notion of witness as presence, one may establish an identity for:

1. Religious in the church;
2. Laity in the church.

e. Because of resurrection, the "life through death" pattern of Christ's value structure becomes comprehensible.

f. Because of resurrection, men can follow the Christ regardless of cost.

10. A Contemporary Spirituality

A contemporary spirituality may be drawn forth from the implications of the study. Its broad outlines would be the following:

a. It must be seen as response to the creative action of God through the continuation of the presence of God among men which was begun by Christ.

b. The catechist must outline contemporary spirituality in terms of incorporating the ideals Christ exemplified in the service of man. Among these ideals are: "Love one another as I have loved you"; treating the "least of my brethren" as one would treat Christ, God; by reason of hope in the resurrection, having the courage to live the highest of human ideals, a project which in the context of the "sin of the world" and the history of sinfulness, may demand a fearsome price.

c. A contemporary spirituality must begin with a sound sense of identity. It must be essentially Christic. The Christian knows all men are addressed by God in the depths of their subjectivity. He knows their authentic response is varied. His stance vis a vis mankind is that he is responding to the special and full revelation of God in Christ, by assuming the same "Emmanuel"-sign role which Christ assumed. For mankind addressed by God he serves as sign of God's reality, concern, and hope for a better world under the fatherhood of God. Because of this hope in the resurrection, the Christian can exemplify the ideals of brotherhood and thereby pose such a hope sign.

d. A contemporary spirituality must be presented in terms of man's assumption of the creative role. He brings meaning to life. His task is the bringing of order and harmony (creativity) to self (the struggle for mature personhood), to his relationships with others (the struggle for community), and lastly to the universe itself (his struggle to build the city of God in the world).

e. The basis of this spirituality will be faith, a decision in the core of man's being in consequence of which the religious world view is accepted and the responsibility as well of managing one's existence in its light.

f. The commitment which founds this world view is total and immediate. Achievement is gradual, though it must be consistent.

g. Within this framework, the model of the God-man relationship is love, human love. Wonder will be part of the picture. Silence and awareness another part of it. It will be seen as task rather than product, an ongoing relational process with growth and development as necessary parts of it.

h. Its basic thrust will be response by way of "being for" rather than "talking to". In a word it will be a symbolic communication to man of God's presence through the lives of those committed to him in resurrectional hope.

1. Throughout it will be a spirituality rooted in the human, one which provides the context in which man may create meaning for his life in relationship to God.

Contemporary Character of Catechetical Implications

The contemporary character of the implications drawn from the symbolic insights of the three subjects of this study may be assessed by an examination of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, through an examination of contemporary catechetical theory, and lastly through an examination of selected evaluatory instruments used in modern religious education.

Documents of Vatican II¹

The Second Vatican Council was the element which ushered the Church officially into a period of transition and change. As such one does not expect consistency in enunciation from its pronouncements. Nor does one find it. Implications of new positions are not always seen as to their implications. The adoption of one position many times entails

¹Citations from the documents of Vatican II are from: Walter M. Abbott (Gen. Ed.), and Msgr. Joseph Gallagher (Translation Ed.), The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, 1966). Numerical references are those of the individual documents.

revision of several other positions. It is unreasonable to expect that all the ramifications of the "new" thinking be set forth at the time these documents were written. However, the positions taken by Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr are present in the documents and Karl Rahner played a considerable role in the Council itself.

Among the most consistently open documents of the Council, the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (Gaudium et Spes) stands out. An examination of this document will be made in some detail, with citations of important elements in other of the documents to follow.

The theological position underlying the Document on the Church in the Modern World is anthropocentric. It goes to contemporary man in context and acknowledges the changes in thinking and acting of men today.¹ New dynamisms are noted together with the deep longings of man for freedom.² Modern man is seen as one who questions deeply,³ one who has known and experienced alienation and sin.⁴ Man is viewed as the center and crown of creation,⁵ a person, essentially relational.⁶ As a result of these changes, the need

¹"The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., #4.

²Ibid., no. 5 to 9.

³Ibid., no. 10.

⁴Ibid., no. 13.

⁵Ibid., no. 12.

⁶Ibid.

for a new synthesis of Christian doctrine is seen as a must.¹ The council indicates further that relative to modern man, it is interested, concerned, and desirous of both assisting and being assisted by him.² Anxious to dialogue with him,³ the Church indicates that it is her interest to help the world become human.⁴

Gaudium et Spes enunciates the church's concern for the human dimension of man.⁵ She enunciates its goodness⁶ and indicates that the world of man in its entirety is of importance to the Christian and to the church.⁷ Among the concerns she shares with the rest of mankind are: the socio-economic life of men,⁸ the political arena,⁹ as well as the buildup of international community¹⁰ in a context of peace and unity among nations.¹¹ Enunciating the role of the Christian to make the world more human,¹² she

¹Ibid., nos. 5, 8.

²Ibid., nos. 3, 4, 10, 41-43, 44, 90.

³Ibid., no. 40.

⁴Ibid., nos. 92-3.

⁵Ibid., nos. 41, 2.

⁶Ibid., no. 53.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., nos. 30, 63, 70.

⁹Ibid., nos. 74-6.

¹⁰Ibid., nos. 82-6.

¹¹Ibid., no. 77.

¹²Ibid., nos. 39, 43, 57, 93.

announces her intent and willingness to work with mankind in the resolution of its problems.¹ This is necessarily so, she maintains, since maturity, peace and creative development as well as the community of mankind are responses of the Christian to God.²

In this day, the church sees her role as the service of man.³ Her presence is to assure man that his longings for immortality are well-founded,⁴ and that his task is to involve himself in the building of the earth.⁵ She, church, sign to mankind⁶, is to be leaven,⁷ a sign of hope to man as he goes about that task.⁸

The theme of person is found in Gaudium et Spes. Person is the goal of all social institutions.⁹ Dignity and reverence for person, which are a must,¹⁰ are the basis for respect, toleration for those thinking differently from

¹Ibid., 10.

²Ibid., 34-38.

³Ibid., 3.

⁴Ibid., 19.

⁵Ibid., 43.

⁶Ibid., 21.

⁷Ibid., 40.

⁸Ibid., 21.

⁹Ibid., 25.

¹⁰Ibid., 23, 25, 27, 34.

ourselves.¹ That this is necessarily a Christian concept stems from the thinking of a Christ who made love of even an enemy a demand.²

Gaudium et Spes takes note of the themes underlying the work of Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr, by noting that God is present to man in his subjectivity,³ and that he is addressed by God in creation itself.⁴ Hence, the document states, grace works in the hearts of all men of good will.⁵

The themes which flow from study are verified in other documents of the Council. In the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, the meaning and value of creation are stressed.⁶ The value of person and the human dimension as such are set forth in the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church.⁷ This same decree sets forth in a positive note the relations of the church with modern science.⁸

The freedom which is so strongly implied in the symbolic thought of the subjects of this study if one's religious

¹Ibid., 28.

²Ibid., 29.

³Ibid., 14, 16.

⁴Ibid., 19.

⁵Ibid.

⁶"The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., 36.

⁷"Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., 12.

⁸Ibid., 14.

dedication is to be mature, finds its expression in the very existence of the Declaration on Religious Freedom. Within that document the basis for religious freedom in society is rooted in the dignity of the human person,¹ and in the very nature of the act of religion which entails free and voluntary acts.² The same theme is enunciated by the Declaration on Christian Education, where it is noted that the task of education includes education to freedom and brotherhood.³

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy enunciates the theme of presence, describing the various presences of Christ found in the liturgy of the Mass.⁴ The theme of the person of Christ as the revelation of God is found in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.⁵ A consciousness of an ecumenical perspective for theological presentation

¹"Declaration on Religious Freedom," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., 1, 2.

²Ibid., 3, 10.

³"Declaration on Christian Education," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., 1.

⁴"The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., 7.

⁵"Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., 4.

is enjoined in the Decree on Ecumenism.¹ In this latter decree the notion of metanoia on the part of Christians for past failures which led to disunity is set forth.²

The Decree on Priestly Formation notes that the orientation of the priest is to be service.³ He is to be trained in the modern sciences and especially psychology and pedagogy. Maturity, stability, and sound judgement are characteristics which are to be looked for and enhanced.⁴

One may conclude that the themes from Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr are found in the documents of Vatican II, profusely in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and throughout various other of the documents as well. Among them are theological anthropology, creativity, symbol, person, revelation as personal self-communication and others. And in the light of Rahner's presence and influence at the Council itself, such a conclusion is to be expected.

Contemporary Catechetical Theory

A second area to be probed to assess the contemporary character of the implications of this study is

¹"Decree on Ecumenism," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., 11.

²Ibid., 4, 6, 7.

³"Decree on Priestly Formation," in Walter M. Abbott, op. cit., 9.

⁴Ibid., 11-13.

contemporary catechetical theory. Here the writings of Gabriel Moran, Gerard Sloyan, and James Michael Lee will be examined, followed by a cross section of others.

The context for the theological writing of Gabriel Moran is revelational. (Design for Religion, Forward, Davis).¹ Revelation is described as an ongoing happening.² It is a creational revelation, one which takes place in creation itself, creation being considered an on-going process.³ Noting the difference between knowing a person and knowing an object,⁴ Moran describes revelation as an inter personal communication in which words are not primary,⁵ though they do clarify experience.⁶ Revelation then is an historical and continuing intersubjective communion.⁷ It is an act of the participating subject's becoming aware of the

¹Gabriel Moran, Design for Religion (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

²Gabriel Moran, Vision and Tactics (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 50, 1; Gabriel Moran, Catechesis of Revelation (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966); Gabriel Moran, Theology of Revelation (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 46.

³Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 132.

⁴Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 67.

⁵Ibid., p. 11.

⁶Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 139.

⁷Vision and Tactics, op. cit., pp. 44, 45, 52; Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 142; Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 50.

communion between God and man.¹ It takes place in the living experience of man.² The direct object of the word to reveal, Moran notes, is "god-man".³

Moran subscribes to the notion that the supernatural orientation of man is something which is part of man and has always been such:

Every man is born into a supernatural order and is oriented to a supernatural end before he becomes consciously and reflexively aware of it.⁴

Thus he maintains that man's relation to God in creation and in Christ are dynamisms prior to man's becoming aware of them.⁵ Consequently the most ordinary acts of man have a dimension to them which is more than human.⁶ Hence he can deduce the task of the catechist as being that of conveying what it means to become a person in the light of Christ.⁷

¹Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 48; Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 103.

²Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 112; Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 141.

³Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 40; Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 55, 77; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 23.

⁴Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 148.

⁵Ibid., p. 155.

⁶Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 167; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 20, 35; Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 39, 75, 134; Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 128.

⁷Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 125; Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 53 ff, 72.

The notion of symbol is an underlying appreciation in Moran's work. God, he notes, revealed himself to man in symbol.¹ The revelation of Christ was at the same time a revelation of the Trinity.² The church as the present revelatory sign³ is Christianity's greatest argument.⁴ Again, he notes that the most eloquent sign of Christ is the lived life of his followers.⁵

Liturgy and liturgical expression is symbolic; it says in symbol what life says on an ongoing basis.⁶ Speaking further of symbol, Moran notes that it conveys what discourse cannot.⁷ Through the symbol, e.g. drama, feelings can be shared in a non-threatening way.⁸ Drama then is the highest form of education.⁹

¹Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 44.

²Ibid., p. 62.

³Ibid., p. 116; Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 135.

⁴Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 64.

⁵Ibid., p. 64, 92; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 61; Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 142.

⁶Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 127; Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 100.

⁷Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 108, 9.

⁸Ibid., p. 111.

⁹Ibid.

Moran's appreciation of symbol extends to those involved in religious education. The catechist himself is a symbol.¹ Most religion teachers use too many words.² And again, the role of parents regarding religious education is not to do but to be.³

Continuing the probe for symbol, one notes its presence in a statement like that which indicates that God is revealed in the "letting be of beings".⁴ It is present also in his notion that the response of man to God is personal,⁵ and it involves a process of gradual growth and development.⁶ Lastly, history, for Moran culminates in the Christ symbol.⁷

The themes of faith, freedom and decision are prominent in Moran. So strong is his conviction as to the need for freedom for the faith decision that for him Christianity is a religion for adults.⁸ Faith remains for him the central

¹Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 21, 67, 75, 119; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 55-56.

²Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 24.

³Ibid., p. 16, 32.

⁴Ibid., p. 24.

⁵Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 100.

⁶Ibid., p. 51, 125; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 95, 113; Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 130.

⁷Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 48.

⁸Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 127; Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 103; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 13, 29, 30.

Christian experience.¹ Freedom is a must if one is to make a commitment to Christ on the one hand,² and on the other hand, Christ is the way to true freedom.³

One of the main consequences of theology as revelational is that it is anthropocentric and Moran's is no exception.⁴ To know God, one must know Christ as human.⁵ Real Christianity in the eyes of Moran is a synthesis of the Gospel and the concrete situation.⁶ Creativity within the realm of the human is part of such a theology,⁷ and it is the role of the Christian to accept the human and push beyond it.⁸ In such a perspective, human science is needed to shed useful light on man and thereby God as well.⁹

¹Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 142.

²Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 38, 127; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., pp. 36, 55-56, 67, 128-129; Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 100, 117.

³Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 161.

⁴Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., pp. 48, 133-141; Theology of Revelation, op. cit., p. 112; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., pp. 41, 46, 52-54.

⁵Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 59; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 112, 113.

⁶Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 139.

⁷Ibid., p. 97.

⁸Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 75, 92.

⁹Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 16, 53; Design for Religion, op. cit., pp. 44, 74, 82, 121.

Catechetics for Gabriel Moran would consist in interpreting human experience in the light of Christ.¹ He notes the further need of presenting Christianity in terms of people and not of things.² In the light of this position, he maintains that doctrine's importance must be neither exaggerated nor minimized.³ The Spirit is the primary religious educator,⁴ and catechesis involves looking together for the truth.⁵ In Catechesis, all the symbols, especially the "pre-verbal", serve to foster a sense of wonder, fantasy, mystery.⁶ Eschatology, for Moran, an element which he feels to have been avoided of late in theological circles, is of central importance for theology.⁷

Gerard Sloyan's is a name familiar to all involved in religious education for the several years in which he headed the Department of Religious Education at Catholic University. For Sloyan, God can be known by men only in

¹Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 46-50;
Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 44-48.

²Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 67.

³Ibid., p. 113; Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 148.

⁴Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 116, 7.

⁵Vision and Tactics, op. cit., p. 51.

⁶Design for Religion, op. cit., p. 94.

⁷Catechesis of Revelation, op. cit., p. 63.

symbol.¹ The reality of God's action towards man is communicated to man verbally yet non-rationally as well as rationally; in the communication of God to man words are used but at times they are used symbolically.² Interpersonal relations are the clearest sign and the best analogy for the work of God among men.³ In describing the response to God's word, he notes that it entails "taking of God's entire word with our 'entire being'."⁴

For Sloyan, God becomes known to man in the depths of man's consciousness.⁵ God first of all spoke to man through his deeds not through human summaries of them.⁶

Sloyan firms up the personal theme in catechetics. The underlying reality of all we experience as person, he maintains, is God.⁷ Again, he notes that Christians are those men for whom reality of personal relationships is love of God in Jesus.⁸

¹Gerard Sloyan, Speaking of Religious Education (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 35, 50, 51.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 183.

⁵Ibid., p. 36.

⁶Gerard Sloyan, "What Should Children's Catechisms Be Like?" Johannes Hofinger and Theodore Stone, Pastoral Catechetics (New York: Herder and Herder,), p. 36.

⁷Speaking of Religious Education, op. cit., p. 36.

⁸Ibid., p. 37.

Relative to the locus of revelation, Sloyan places this in human experience.¹ For Christians, there is no such thing as "mere humanism". Van Buren is quoted by Sloyan to indicate that if the church in her task is going to communicate with people, she had better begin listening to what the world is saying.²

At this point an examination may be made of the work of James Michael Lee. The insights of Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr indicate that the human dimension must be taken seriously and that the findings of the behavioral sciences and other of the human sciences must be taken seriously in the context of a theological anthropology. In a man like Lee, one finds an individual who takes the findings of the human sciences with such seriousness that perhaps he might be faulted.³

Religious education for James Michael Lee consists in the "conscious and deliberative facilitation of specified behavioral goals".⁴ His appreciation of symbol is unquestionable in several areas. For example, he notes that environmental factors are to be taken very seriously as educative

¹Ibid., p. 128.

²Ibid., p. 48.

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⁴James Michael Lee, "Forward" in James Michael Lee and Patrick C. Rooney (eds.) Towards a Future for Religious Education (Dayton: Pflaum, 1970), p. 1.

means in securing behavioral change.¹ In his structuring theory, he utilizes several symbolic factors. He seeks to engage the whole person in the educative process.² The teacher is viewed as a symbol.³ Learning is described as experience.⁴ Religious education must, he feels, stress the affective categories.⁵ From his perspective then he notes that Christ's concern was more for Christian behavior than for religious instruction.⁶

Other members of his "school" who have contributed to the book he co-edited with Patrick Rooney, also betray a strong appreciation for the educational technique and behavioral change endorsed by Lee. Jeffrey Keefe manifests the strongly anthropocentric approach in concerning himself with character, attitude, value and their formation.⁷ For him man is relational and he develops the notion of a self-concept along the lines of Rahner's understanding of the

¹James Michael Lee, "The Teaching of Religion," in Lee-Rooney, op. cit., p. 66 ff.

²Ibid., p. 59.

³Ibid., p. 66.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 78, 9.

⁶James Michael Lee, "Behavioral Objectives in Religious Education," The Living Light, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Winter, 1970).

⁷Jeffrey Keefe, "The Learning of Attitudes, Values, Beliefs," in Lee-Rooney, op. cit., p. 30 ff.

real symbol.¹ For Keefe, the teacher has a symbolic dimension of which he must be aware and which he must use in his endeavors.² Interestingly, Keefe notes that agencies other than the home have only 1/10 the influence of the home in the developmental life of the child--and this includes the school.³

Piveteau, another of the contributors, also stresses this relational aspect of man and sees as the key to development and formation interpersonal relationships.⁴

For Kiesling, liturgical expression is symbolic expression. Noting the essentially non-verbal character of liturgy he issues a caution against any tendencies to verbalize within liturgy.⁵

Rooney notes that the principal preoccupation of the new religion is person.⁶ He sees catechetical proclamation as revelation--response being metanoia or change of life.⁷ To be a Christian for him is to assume responsibility for the world,⁸ and the task of the catechist is that of

¹Ibid., p. 37, 8.

²Ibid., p. 54.

³Ibid., p. 50.

⁴Ibid., p. 109, 110.

⁵Didier Piveteau, "Biblical Pedagogics," in Lee-Rooney, op. cit., p. 131.

⁶Patrick Rooney, "Religious Instruction in the Context of Catholic Schooling," Lee-Rooney, op. cit.

⁷Ibid., p. 13-15.

⁸Ibid.

fostering the personal development of the individual with a view to his being able to accomplish the "building of the earth".

One may now turn to a random sampling of the works of others in contemporary catechesis. Sister Maria De la Cruz highlights the appreciation of symbol in catechetics through noting the findings of psychologists that children learn through images, pictures, stories, and personal experiences.¹ In the approach to God for children, silence plays an important role.²

Mary Perkins Ryan urges approaching the sacraments for children in terms of communications of Christ.³ Noting the importance of interpersonal relationships, she strives in the course of her whole approach to root God in the experience of her charges.

Eva Fleischner, discussing method, speaks of gesture, art, acting, story-telling and song, all of which are essentially non-verbal or symbolic approaches.⁴ Possessed of a keen appreciation of "presence" she notes that the desire to see God is deep in the heart of every man.⁵ For her,

¹Gerard Sloyan, ed., Modern Catechetics (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 106.

²Ibid., p. 112.

³Ibid., p. 37.

⁴Ibid., p. 144.

⁵Ibid., p. 126.

childhood is the time for laying the foundations of adult faith.¹ In the child, there is to be developed a sense of the religious,² a sense of God.³ In so doing, the methods used must be psychologically sound, creative and involving.⁴

Ramon Echarron roots catechetics deeply in the human dimension.⁵ For him the purpose of religious education is the interpretation of experience.⁶ Experience communicates as does language.⁷ Hence it is extremely important if one is to know man. Echarron notes that man is changing in that he has a new vision of himself, of his relationships to others--a new scientific awareness.⁸ A real appreciation for the secular realm is coupled with a conception of human nature as perfectible.⁹ In modern society, mobility, geographic, social and socio-economic

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 127.

³Ibid., p. 131, 2.

⁴Ibid., p. 141.

⁵Ramon Echarron, "Communicating the Faith in Present-day Society," in Jan Micklinghoff, Exec. Secy. of Ed. Board, Catechetics for the Future, Vol. 53 of Concilium: Theology in the Age of Renewal (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

⁶Ibid., p. 13.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 15, 16.

⁹Ibid., p. 17.

make loneliness a real threat.¹ Our modern age is one of the predominance of the image.² This is the experience of modern man, the interpretation of which along religious lines is the job of the catechist. This is the experience in which religious education is to begin.³ And the methods today, which stem from the traditional framework say little to modern man.⁴ However, Echarron sees no cause for alarm since faith truths, as he puts it, can be expressed in many ways.⁵

Adolf Exeler views faith as something which makes possible true humanity in the world.⁶ It is something which man abandons often because he seeks autonomy and freedom.⁷ Involved in faith is process or growth, an element one must be mindful of in dealing with youth.⁸ A contemporary phenomenon to which he calls attention is the fact that faith may no longer be taken for granted.⁹

¹Ibid., p. 18.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 19.

⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁵Ibid., p. 21.

⁶Adolf Exeler, "Education and Catechetics," in Jan Micklinghoff, op. cit., p. 34, 38.

⁷Ibid., p. 38.

⁸Ibid., p. 39.

⁹Ibid., p. 42.

For Karl Ernst Nipkow, the Catholic catechist must be both theologically and educationally sound--he must address man where he finds him.¹ There must be, he feels, a greater use of materials not specifically religious in schools.² For the first five years of religious education, he would highlight two elements: the relationship between faith-reality and faith-experience; and secondly, the use of fairy stories, legends, songs, etc.³ For Nipkow, the locus of catechesis must be the historical reality where men actually live their lives, and it must be in the context of man's contemporary understanding of self and the world.⁴ He calls it wrong to preach the gospel as an ahistorical or supermundane truth. Rather, to preach effectively calls for continually renewed analyses of reality with the students.⁵ Nipkow conceives of being a Christian as living in hope, never able to compromise with the world, with death or with evil.⁶ It is to be deeply involved in the dynamism that is the human dimension.⁷

¹Karl Ernst Nipkow, "Beyond the Bible in Religious Education," in Jan Micklinghoff, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

²*Ibid.*, p. 47, 8.

³*Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 49, 53-54.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 52-53.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 55.

For Christiane Brusselmans, the contemporary world is one of pluralism.¹ Reality, she feels is rich, admitting of insight from several perspectives. The one caution is that one must not absolutize. Catechesis is the interpretation of human experience.² As such it is necessarily anthropocentric and experience-oriented. The catechist must search the signs of the times for the "rumors of angels".

Sylvester Wevitavidanelage maintains the position that religious education will succeed only if close collaboration with the family is achieved.³ He calls for the following elements: (1) A deeper commitment entailing an amount of demythologizing to refine religious understanding and life. (2) A new approach to presentation coinciding more readily with the thought patterns and experience of the audience. (3) The formation of christians who will recognize the working of the spirit in the very environment and in the events of their lives. (4) An approach which will form individual Christians and the community into a more dynamic, mission-oriented, outgoing charity. (5) The

¹Christiane Brusselmans, "A Catechesis Adapted to the Present Age and the Liturgical Initiation of Children," in Jan Micklinghoff, op. cit., p. 69.

²Ibid., p. 71.

³Sylvester Wevitavidanelage, "New Directions in Catechetics in the Missions," in Jan Micklinghoff, op. cit., p. 75, 6.

fostering of the realization among Christians that the privations and sufferings of their individual and collective lives are a necessary part of the history of salvation, the birth of both the church and the individual. (6) The formation of Christians who will take the initiative and responsibility in their own development and in the development of their communities.¹

J. William Bless, who was the general editor of the board of editors for the Dutch Catechism, notes that there were certain elements upon which the board decided as to the Dutch catechism. Among these were the fact that it had to be an adult catechism, since it was to adults that the proclamation of faith was to be made.² Secondly, if the catechism was to be for contemporary man, it was decided that it had to include the following: (1) Experience was to be the starting point. (2) The proclamation of faith was to be rooted deeply in that human experience, in terms which were comprehensible to it. (3) The form of the book had to be that of talking together in faith.³ Consequently, the language had to eschew compulsion, and consist simply in an invitation to belief.⁴ (4) Since the faith was to be

¹Ibid., p. 78, 9.

²William Bless, "What are the Main Requirements for a New Catechism," in Jan Micklinghoff, op. cit., p. 93.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 95.

presented as free surrender to God,¹ the tenor of the book was to be dialogic throughout.²

At this point it must be concluded from the examination of catechetical theory of men like Gabriel Moran, Gerard Sloyan, and James Michael Lee and a sampling of others, that the implications of the study for contemporary catechesis are indeed present in the writings of the theorists. One may now turn to the evaluatory instruments for the use of the practitioners.

Evaluatory Instruments

One may see the contemporary character of the implications of this study from an examination of the various evaluatory instruments which are placed at the disposal of those engaged in the task of catechetics. For purposes of this study, the following instruments shall be examined:

1. Instrument for the Evaluation of Religion Textbooks³
2. Criteria for the Evaluation of Religious Education Programs⁴
3. Self Evaluation Instrument for Religious Educators⁵

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 96.

³Instrument for the Evaluation of Religion Textbooks, Division of Research in Religious Education of the Education Department of the U.S.C.C., Washington, D. C.: 1970. (At the request of the American Hierarchy.)

⁴Criteria for the Evaluation of Religious Education Programs, Conference of Directors of Religious Education for Schools of the N.C.E.A., Washington, D. C.: 1970.

⁵Self Evaluation Instrument for Religious Educators, C.A.R.A., Washington, D. C.: 1971.

Each of these instruments will be examined in turn, and the elements which indicate the presence of the appreciations of this study spelled out.

1. Instrument for the Evaluation of Religion Textbooks

Examination of this instrument reveals that a basic aim of religious education must be leading believers to maturity in Christ.¹ Implied in this is an appreciation for person and a viewing of the human dimension as the area of response for man to God. The faith decision is seen as something fundamental and free.² In its essence, the Christian message in Christ, risen, alive and active in the community.³ There is indication of the need to incorporate the insights of the sciences in the quest to root Christianity in Christian experience.⁴ The need for securing a unified vision of the Christian life is set forth as one of the priorities.⁵

In the section in which the manner of presentation of the various themes in the textbooks is probed, the themes called for by Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr are among

¹Instrument for the Evaluation of Religion Textbooks, op. cit., p. 7.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 8.

⁵Ibid.

those present. Among these are the following:

1. Revelation as self-communication of God to man,¹ and revelation as communicated through human experience.²
2. Salvation as freedom, cosmic redemption.³
3. Grace as personal relatedness.⁴
4. Church as sign of Christ in the world, family of God, a pilgrim people.⁵
5. Ministry in the Church as service.⁶
6. The Roman Catholic Church as a segment, albeit a special one, within a divided Christendom.⁷
7. Person of Christ as brother, or friend whose love transforms us, risen Lord.⁸
8. Christ as the person who reveals the Father.⁹
9. Liturgy as the communal expression of faith and prayer, as the celebration of life.¹⁰
10. Sacraments as personal encounters with the risen Christ and signs of the church.¹¹

¹Ibid., p. 11, n. 1.

²Ibid., p. 11, n. 2.

³Ibid., p. 13, n. 5.

⁴Ibid., p. 13, n. 6.

⁵Ibid., p. 14, n. 8.

⁶Ibid., p. 14, 15, n. 8.

⁷Ibid., p. 15, n. 9.

⁸Ibid., p. 15, 16, n. 10.

⁹Ibid., p. 16, n. 11.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 16, n. 12.

¹¹Ibid., p. 17, n. 12.

- a. Baptism as commitment to Christian living.¹
- b. Eucharist as "meal", as unique manifestation of the presence of the risen Lord.²
- c. Marriage as "companionship and mutual love of the spouses".³
- d. Penance as reconciliation with the Christian community.⁴ Sin as broken relationship, rupture of friendship.⁵ Consequences of sin as alienation from God or neighbor, harmful to the human person or the social order.⁶

11. Personal morality and growth as freedom and dignity of person's conscience.⁷

In its assessment of the types of learning sought⁸ and methodology used,⁹ instrument betrays an appreciation of symbol in offering among the alternatives:

- a. Teacher as a catalyst¹⁰
- b. Use of techniques of involvement, and non verbal techniques¹¹
- c. Experiential orientation of the text¹²

¹Ibid., p. 17, n. 14.

²Ibid., p. 19, n. 16.

³Ibid., p. 19, n. 17.

⁴Ibid., p. 21, n. 21.

⁵Ibid., p. 20, n. 18.

⁶Ibid., p. 20, 21, n. 20.

⁷Ibid., p. 22, n. 22.

⁸Ibid., p. 23, n. 1.

⁹Ibid., p. 23, n. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 23, n. 3.

¹¹Ibid., p. 24, n. 4.

¹²Ibid., p. 24, n. 6.

- d. Probe as to whether text heeds student's capacity¹
 - e. Probes whether vocabulary is suited to student's ability²
 - f. Other symbolic appreciations appear in the section on Presuppositions³
12. Among the things sought from the evaluators was whether the texts made an effective presentation concerning faith, Scripture, the Church, and also such things as liturgy, unresolved theological problems, theological pluralism, and psychological and pedagogical approaches.⁴

One may conclude that this instrument most assuredly takes cognizance of the presence of the themes or appreciations called for by this study. Secondly, one may conclude from the setting of the guidelines, that several of these appreciations were judged positively. Lastly, a preliminary examination and tabulation of the results of the study warrant the conclusion that generally speaking, effectiveness of presentation was in proportion to the presence of these themes in the textbooks under consideration.

2. Criteria for the Evaluation of Religious Education Programs

An examination of this study indicates the presence of the following elements which are called for by the present study:

¹Ibid., p. 24, n. 7.

²Ibid., p. 25, n. 8.

³Ibid., p. 26, n. 7.

⁴Ibid., p. 28, n. 1 ff.

1. God present as revealing himself in Christ in several ways and especially in the life experience of man.¹
2. The starting point of catechesis as man himself.
3. Religious Education as response to life in the vision of Christ which summons man to unification. Faith as the basis of the vision. Man as summoned to "build the earth". Person as an ideal to be cherished. Catechesis as a process leading to discovery, deepening appreciation of God through learning experiences both affective and cognitive. Study, reflection and decision as leading to the experiencing of the faith community in loving relationships, apostolic involvement and liturgical worship.
4. The need for self-identity² as human person, as Christian, as Catholic.
5. Awareness and internalization of the values of Christ is called for. Personal and communal response to the social Gospel. Appreciation of value of other faiths. Respect for theological pluralism in the context of mystery. Role of the church as including involvement and continuing mission in the world.
6. Rooting of catechesis in the socio-cultural development of the student, i.e. human experience.³
7. Symbolic character of the teacher.
8. Participation in individual and communal prayer forms (retreats, etc.)⁴

¹Criteria for the Evaluation of Religious Education Programs, op. cit., p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 6.

9. Concern for symbolic communication: audio-visual, involvement programs and visits, etc.¹
10. Atmosphere in which students' ideas, attitudes and values are developed.

One may conclude that in the minds of those who draw up the instrument, individuals concerned with excellence of instruction, the elements called for by this study receive top priority.

3. Self Evaluation Instrument for Religious Educators

This instrument is divided into sections on goals, learning process, personal evaluation and teacher needs. In each of the four areas are found evidence of the need to evaluate one's performance in the light of themes called for by this study.

Among the goals to be adopted are the following: presentation of the redemptive presence of the risen Lord;² fostering readiness for and deepening of the faith; development of individuals who can make free and responsible decisions; the development of a communal sense of the faith relationship of the Christian to others.³

In the evaluation of the learning process these themes appear:

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Self Evaluation Instrument for Religious Educators, op. cit., p. 4. Note--The pagination is that of the pre-publication form. It may differ somewhat in the finalized form.

³Ibid., p. 4 and 5.

1. The presence of the catechist and his personal faith as critical to learning effectiveness.
2. The need for the catechist to be attuned to the social and religious issues of the day.
3. Knowledge of the situation in which youth find themselves today.
4. Promotion of self-understanding and appreciation of individual dignity and worth.
5. An atmosphere of freedom and trust as a means of growth.
6. Learning as necessarily including involvement and participation if it is to be rooted in human experience.
7. Several non-verbal techniques are indicated as elements in the learning process.¹

In the section on personal evaluation,² the following elements are sought:

1. An atmosphere of freedom and trust in the learning situation.
2. Ability to question properly.
3. The mysterious character of the God-man relationship, and its consequently necessary recognition and respect for various manners of response to God.
4. The instructor is questioned as to how carefully the process of education has been anchored in the human experience of his students by giving evidence that he knows himself, their situation and his students themselves.

¹Ibid., p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 6, 7.

In the fourth and last of the sections,¹ the teacher is asked to assess and to communicate whatever might be of value in further and more effective development of the program.

One concludes from an examination of this criteria that the themes called for by this study are both timely and necessary for effective religious education in today's world.

At this point a general conclusion is the section on analysis of evaluatory instruments for religious education may be set forth. An examination of instruments evaluatory of textbooks, of religious educational programs, and of instructors, each of which was published within the past year, indicates the presence and approbation of several of the directions and guidelines called for by this study. One may conclude then to the contemporaneous and timely character of these guidelines and insights according to the directives contained in the documents of the Vatican Council, the writings of contemporary catechetical theorists, and the professional evaluatory criteria for religious education.

Resume and Conclusion to the Study

An analysis has been made of the role of symbol in the writings of Karl Rahner, Mircea Eliade and H. Richard

¹Ibid., p. 8, 9.

Niebuhr. It has been found that these men synthesize their thinking on the relationship of God to man on the basis of their understanding of symbol. For each of them symbol constituted the way in which God communicated himself to man as person. Each spelled out response to the summons of God in terms of symbol, i.e. man was to fashion his total being as an individual made in the image of God. The response of man for these men was interpretational, confessional. It demanded decision and commitment. Entailed was the adoption of an interpretation of life and a commitment to living it out consistently. Each spelled out the implications of such a commitment, the scope of the vision, differently. Response in Rahner and Niebuhr, who addressed themselves more directly to Christianity, was in terms of the totality of man's life, was in terms of "being" rather than simply "believing". Each of the three men situated both the revelation of God and the response of man deep within the core of man's subjectivity, his human experience. What they offered was a possible interpretation of that experience in the light of the revelation of God. For Rahner and Niebuhr this was in Christ.

In the symbolic theology of these men, the content of catechesis is Christ, the most adequate, complete self-communication of God to man. His life tells man of God and does so by telling him of man. The theology is incarnational, the locus is the human dimension, the stress is person, Man

is because God decided to communicate himself to man. From these symbolic insights were developed a rationale for a religious world-view comprehensible to modern man. From them, more importantly, arose an overview, a synthesis at the same time directional and open ended, one which thrust the responsibility for creativity and initiative squarely on the shoulders of man. From this perspective a series of guidelines were developed for religious catechesis today. These guidelines were then evaluated for their contemporaneous character and their relevance. The standards against which they were checked were the documents of Vatican II, the writings of a sampling of contemporary theorists, and the latest of instruments available for the evaluation of religious educational programs. The need for a new synthesis was uncovered, the need for a rationale for the religious worldview which would make sense to contemporary man. The guidelines which were called for by the study were evidenced in the underlying principles on which the conciliar documents, catechetical theory and the evaluatory instruments were based.

One might conclude the study with the note that if mystery be the context of the God-man-relationship, such a position would necessarily preclude absolutization. Yet the writings of Rahner, Eliade and Niebuhr, in their usage of symbol, provide contemporary man with directions that are useful in making decisions as to the task of the catechist

in the modern world. The Divine Religious Educator taught by what he was, by the symbol that was his life. Man could do worse than follow in the footsteps of the Master.

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